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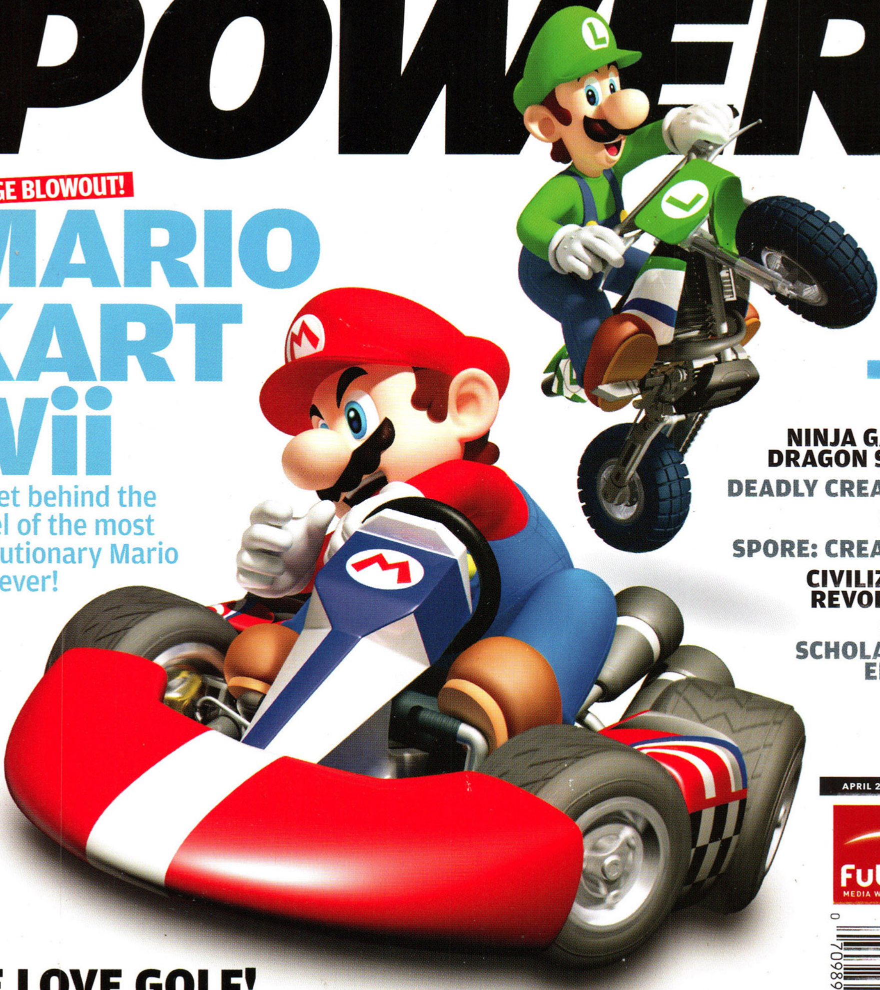

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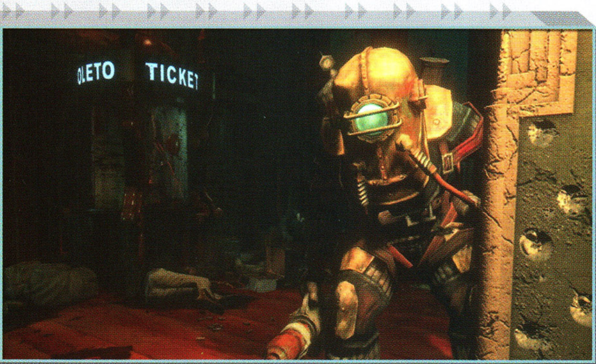
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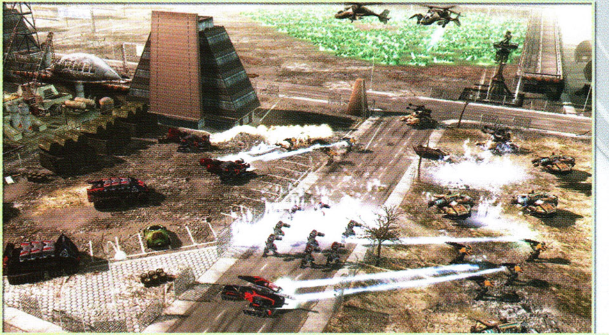

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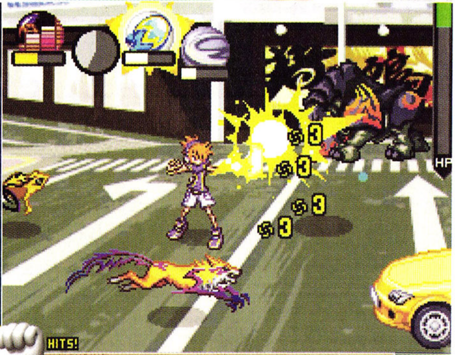

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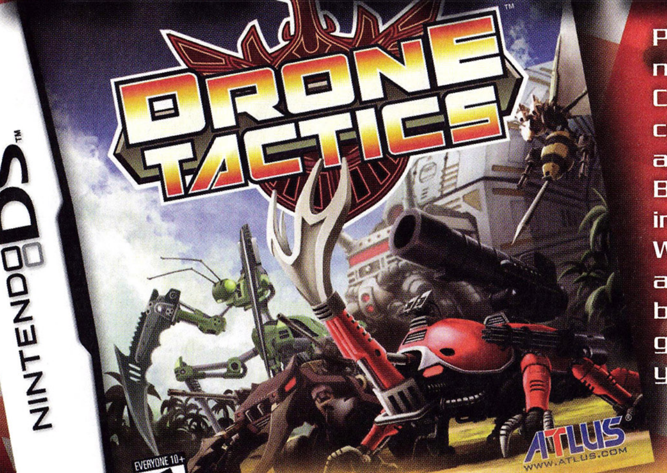
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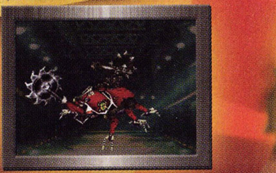

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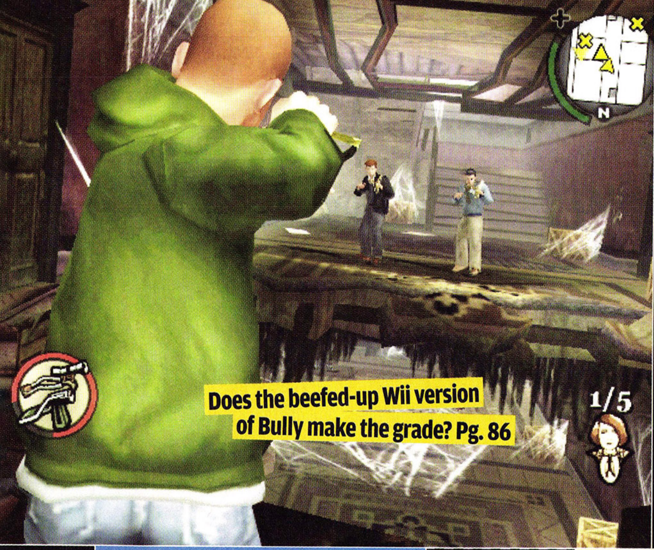
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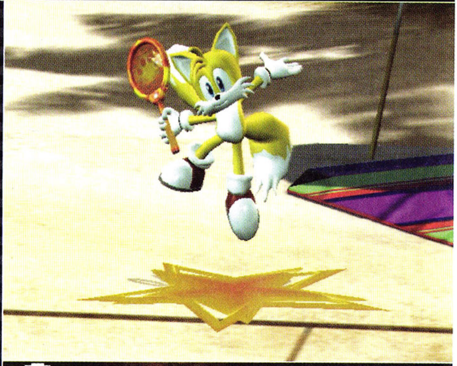

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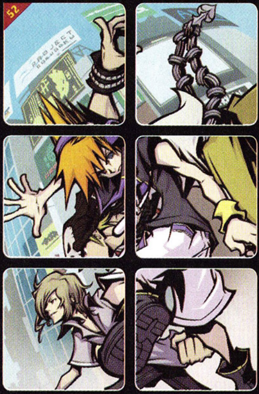

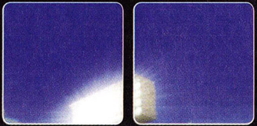

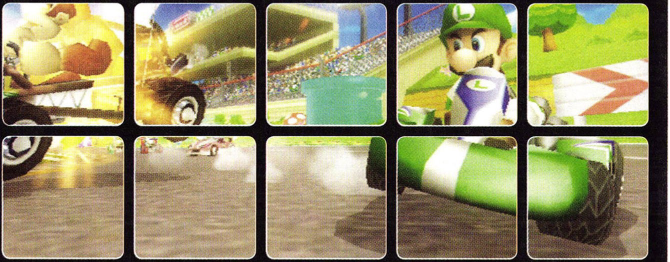

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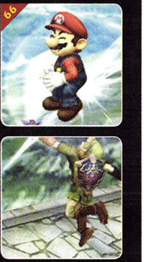

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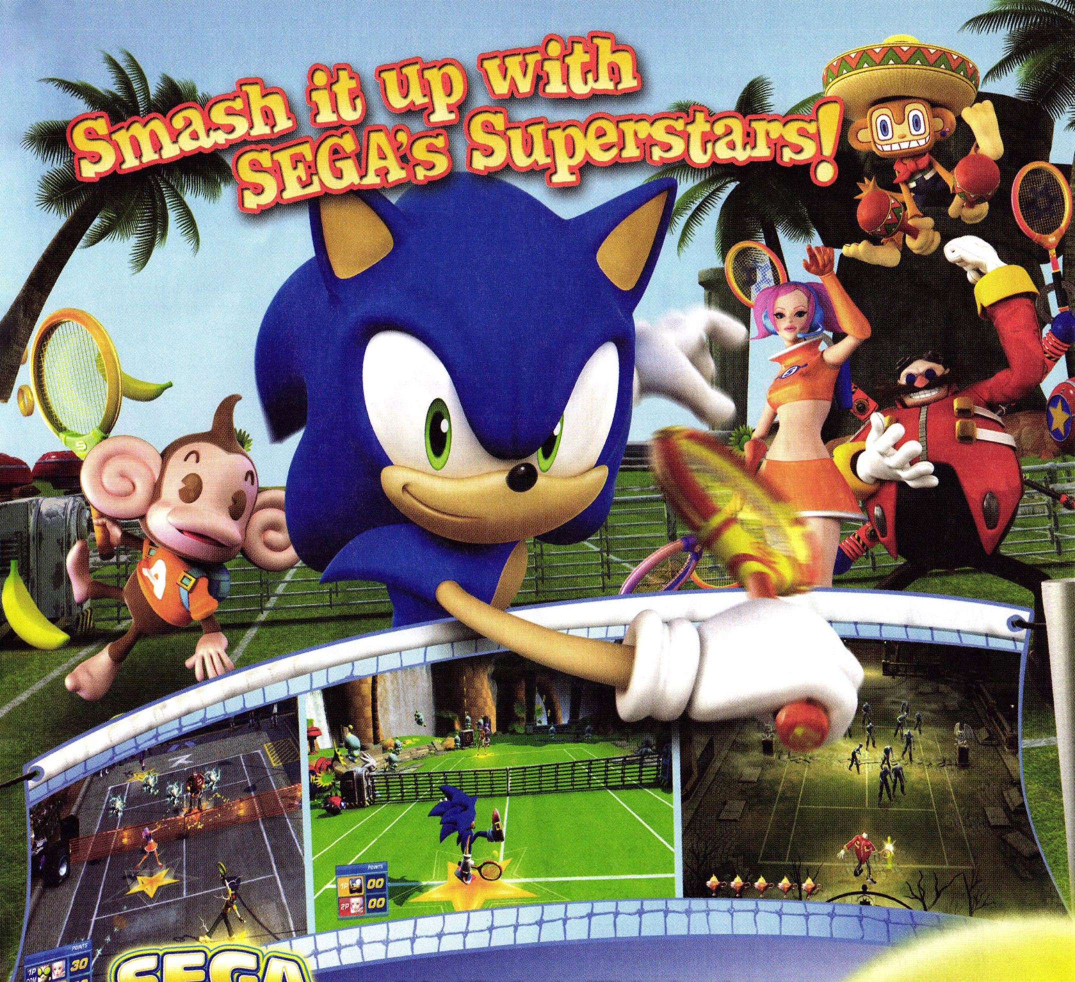
VC = VIRTUAL CONSOLE
Wii = Wii
WW = WiiWare



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Pulse

Change is Good

The huge success of Wii and Nintendo DS has made me realize how important change is to Nintendo gaming. From the first control pad on the NES to the invention of the modern 3-D action game with Super Mario 64 to today's touch screen and motion controls, fans have had the most to cheer about when Nintendo has tried something new.

Of course, players haven't always embraced change. When you're already happy with how a beloved series plays, the idea of altering it can be scary. Why fix it if it ain't broke, right? But as we once again discovered with Mario Kart Wii's new Wii Wheel this month, Nintendo's new ideas succeed way more often than they fail. I don't think it's a coincidence that the GameCube, Nintendo's least successful console, was also its least innovative—it was essentially an N64 with better graphics.

One of the reasons why I'm such a big fan of Nintendo is that it's the only company that can still give me that magical spark, that feeling of newness, that I got when I first fell in love with games. Here's hoping that Nintendo will continue to challenge themselves, and us, with brand-new experiences.

CHRIS SLATE **EDITOR IN CHIEF**

[LETTERS]

The answers to this month's letters are being typed up in our brand-new fifth-floor San Francisco Bay Area office. We've got a gorgeous panoramic view of the bay, a giant new HDTV, and our very own kitchen (but alas, no sink). Due to our move, everyone please remember to use our new mailing address which can be found on page 10. Now, to the letters!

WASH YOUR HANDS!

In Volume 225 on page 90, under the Sonic Riders: Zero Gravity review, there is a thumbprint on the page. But when I looked at my friend's copy of Nintendo Power, his didn't have the thumbprint. How many issues do you think have this mistake?

MICHAEL W.

Michael, tell the truth—have you been eating handfuls of Cocoa Puffs while reading again?

CHRIS CRISIS

After reading your response to the "Chris Power" letter in Volume 225, I'm wondering how everyone there named Chris refer to each other around the office. Do you guys go by last names, or do you have nicknames for each other?

TYLER M.

In the beginning there was a mad dash of people laying claim to "Chris 1," "Chris 2," "King Chris," "Super Chris," and so on, but we settled into just using each other's last names, instead.

CHRIS UPDATE: Contributing this month as a new regular designer/illustrator is our very first female "Chris," Christina Empedocles!

HAPPY-A-BIRTHDAY!

My son just got a DS for his 6th birthday and is a huge fan of Mario. I thought you might like to see the cake that we made for him.

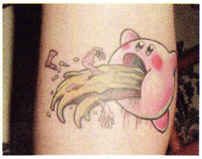
(NO NAME GIVEN)

Wow, that's really an amazing icing illustration! I'd almost regret eating it...almost. As anyone who knows how much I love cake will tell you, I'd chow down on the Mona Lisa if it were painted on a delicious Duncan Hines.

KIRBY CALF

Check out the ink that I had done on the back of my right calf this past summer!

RYAN M.



That's actually a lot yuckier than I remember Kirby being. What—or who—did he eat?!

GOMEN NASAI

In Volume 225's "Lost in Translation" feature, there is an error in the translation of the DS game titles Osu! Tatakae! Ouendan and Ouendan 2. It's "Go! Fight! Cheer Squad," not, "Hey! Fight! Cheer Squad." Lear your Japanese!

CODELYOKO31

Point taken, but in return we'd like to politely suggest that you should "lear" your English.

LOOK, UP IN THE SKY

Do you think it would be cool to have an astronomy game for DS? I want to become an astronomer. GO NINTENDO!

ODIN

Whoa, nice enthusiasm! In this age of DS cooking simulators and brain testers, an astronomy game doesn't sound like a bad idea at all. It could feature an interactive map of the galaxy with touch-to-read info on planets and constellations, with a daily reminder of which heavenly bodies are currently at their most visible in the night sky. Toss in live space probe video through the Nintendo Wi-Fi Connection and I'm sold!

GAME OF THE FUTURE

Hey, I've got an Idea! How about a game were you fly? Yes, just fly. It could be called "Sky and all You do is Fly Around Cities, Forests, Sewers, and Deserts." It would be the game of the Future!

(NO NAME GIVEN)

If Nintendo can publish a game where all you do is swim around the ocean, I suppose this could work. But...why would you want to fly around sewers?

CUTTING-EDGE

Here are three of my sword replicas. On the left is Anduril, from The Lord of the Rings: Return of the King; on the right is Zangetsu, Ichigo Kurosaki's Zanpakuto from Bleach; and in the middle...well, I shouldn't have to introduce this sword as it's the reason I'm writing to you, but I will anyway: it's the Master Sword from The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time!

(NO NAME GIVEN)

So THAT'S where I left it—hurry up and send that my way, will ya? The kingdom won't save itself, y'know!

ALL STITCHED UP

One of my first issues of Nintendo Power featured an artist who cross-stitched video game characters, and now I've done my own: a red-and-orange Mega Man for my Fire Man-obsessed sister, and five Pokémon—Togekiss, Eevee, Butterfree, and two Pikachu.

SARA Y.

Those look pixel-perfect, Sara! How about stitching up a giant tapestry of Nintendo characters for the new NP office? C'mon, what's a couple hundred hours of work between friends?

DON'T TRY IT AT HOME

I've been trying to duplicate Link's sword tactics from Twilight Princess with my old wooden sword. So far I've succeeded in hitting myself in the head, bruising my kneecap, and giving myself multiple splinters. You must tell me how Link does it!

DIEHARDNINTENDOFANHARRISFUN

For goodness' sake, put down that wooden sword! Just look at what you gave us as your name—you've clearly suffered a concussion!

THE DEBATE CONTINUES

I want to add my opinion to your ninja-versus-pirate debate. I agree with you that real-life ninjas would beat the crap out of real-life pirates, but if you're talking about fantasy ninjas vs. fantasy pirates, then I'm going to have to disagree with you guys. What about the pirates from the One Piece series? If you watch the Japanese version of the anime and read the manga, you can see that these pirates are just as fast, strong, and agile as any ninja.

(NO NAME GIVEN)

Good point, but there's no way to truly settle this argument without knowing two things: which side would Mr. T choose, and would Chuck Norris stand with him or against him?

SICK OF SONIC

I'm sick of all the Sonic worship that goes on in these once-hallowed pages. If I recall, the name of the magazine is *Nintendo* Power, not *Sega* Power. I got into games during the SNES/Genesis console war, and was trained by this very publication to loathe the hedgehog with every fiber of my being. It's a bit late in the game to start trying to convince me otherwise, don't you think? I'm sure that you turncoats over at the "new" Nintendo Power will have your fanboyism offended and will feel the need to flame my letter, but this isn't just my opinion, it's the opinion of hundreds—if not thousands—of true Nintendo fans. I couldn't care less about the cries of shock and rage by all of the 12-year-olds out there, who whine when someone calls Tails a "mutant squirrel" (V. 224), who wouldn't know a good game if Naruto ran up and smacked them with it. The original NP staff would be ashamed of all of you. Down with hedgehogs, long live plumbers!

ALEX W.

Alex, I can't tell you the joy that your letter has given us here at NP headquarters—Steve almost died, he laughed so hard. You keep those nutty emails coming, crazy guy!

I have a question for you guys: who's your all-time favorite Nintendo character? Mine is Luigi because I think people focus too much on Mario, Peach, and Yoshi. For goodness' sake, Luigi is Mario's partner—how does Yoshi overshadow him?

MICHAEL P.

Luigi is also Steve's favorite because he, too, thinks the lankier brother gets overlooked. Mario's my guy—I think ol' green hat has been riding his coattails too long. Get a job, Luigi! Chris Hoffman and Justin both pick Link for his heroism and cool toys, while Chris Imlay loves Bowser's peekaboo poltergeists, the Boos.

Sara's cross-stitch pieces are works of art. If anyone else out there has handmade Nintendo character creations, send 'em in!

SIBLING RIVALRY

I've got a great game idea that'll knock your socks off! It starts off with Mario getting an award for saving Princess Peach from Bowser more times than anyone else in the Mushroom Kingdom. Luigi, who gets no credit for being Mario's number-one sidekick, Lately, I feel as if Nintendo is making too many games for little kids. Don't get me wrong, Super Mario Galaxy and The Legend of Zelda: Twilight Princess are awesome, but two isn't enough. Wii is supposed to be for gamers of all ages, but so far, the games are just too kid-orientated.

TERENCE D.

Some people have the misconception that Nintendo systems are mainly for kids because they are the only platforms that offer a lot of strong, popular titles for all ages. While the top games on other consoles are aimed directly at older players, Wii is most famous for titles like Wii Sports and Super Mario Galaxy. But a quick search of the ESRB's online games database shows that there are nearly as many games rated Teen or older for Wii as there are for PS3—91 to 106. Terence, maybe you should look a little harder?

becomes jealous of his older brother's fame and uses the treasure they'd collected during their past missions to pay for self-confidence lessons. After learning what he has to do to become a successful hero, Luigi decides to kidnap Peach to see who the best hero really is: Mario or Luigi.

NOAH P.

Wait—if Luigi kidnaps the princess, doesn't that make him the villain? In that case, in the battle to find out who the best hero is, I'd say that Mario wins by default. Luigi should really get his money back for those therapy lessons.

MIRROR, MIRROR

When I recently saw a friend playing the GameCube version of The Legend of Zelda: Twilight Princess, I noticed that the world was a mirror image of the Wii edition. For example, when you are in Ordon Village, the little lake area is to the right on Wii, but it's to the left on the GameCube. Why is that?

KARENANN

Many fans will know this by now, but for those who don't, the world found in the GameCube edition is how the game was originally designed. When sword swings were set to motion controls during the development of the Wii version, the designers found that—since most players swing the Wii remote with their right hand—the movement didn't feel right because Link is left-handed. Flipping the world (and Link along with it) was an easy way to fix the problem.

DON'T GIVE UP!

We Animal Crossing fans need to know if there is any news or rumors about Animal Crossing for Wii. We're beginning to think that there is no hope!

HOBOJO

Never give up hope, Hobojo! While we here at Nintendo Power honestly don't know anything about the game's current status, Katsuya Eguchi, who is in charge of the project, did acknowledge that an Animal Crossing game is in development for Wii as far back as 2005's E3 video game expo. So don't worry, the game is definitely for real. Hang in there!

OLD MAN MARIO

Why hasn't Mario grown old? Except for his change from 2-D to 3-D, he looks almost the same as he did 20 years ago. I mean, just think of it: Mario having a cane, Bowser having a broken back from getting it jumped on a lot, the toads finally buying a security system, Luigi getting too old to vacuum his mansion, Boos having bad eyesight, Goombas getting hearing aids, and Koopas growing facial hair.

DIGIFIRE

And Nintendo could call it "Super Not Fun Bros." Next!

A TRUE GAMER

Here are 10 things that show you are a true gamer:

1. You shout at the TV and think that the character on the screen can hear you.
2. You never turn your DS off; it's always in sleep mode.
3. You have fun shooting down your own men in Call of Duty 3.
4. Whenever you walk around in public, you have Animal Crossing: Wild World set on Tag mode.
5. You've created a Mii of Chris Shepperd.
6. You've had a crush on Tomb Raider's Lara Croft.
7. You've had to get your console repaired after angry outbursts.
8. You've gone bankrupt buying Virtual Console games.
9. You've applied to become a doctor after playing Trauma Center.
10. You can play "Through Fire and Flames" on Expert in Guitar Hero III: Legends of Rock.

(NO NAME GIVEN)

1. Ha, I've done that! 2. That's me, too. 3. What's wrong with you? 4. Haven't tried it. 5. Now you're really starting to scare me. 6. Um... 7. You know, the address we print isn't REALLY where we work... 8. Have you considered getting professional help? 9. Before anyone gives this guy a scalpel, look at the consoles he destroyed in fits of rage! 10. That's pretty cool.

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ALL FATE BREAKS LOOSE.

Nintendo Wi-Fi connection
NINTENDO DS
FINAL FANTASY
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FINAL FANTASY CRYSTAL CHRONICLES
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SQUARE ENIX

FINAL FANTASY®
CRYSTAL CHRONICLES
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ALONE OR WITH FRIENDS,
THE ADVENTURES BEGIN
MARCH 2008

EVERYONE 10+
E 10+
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
Fantasy Violence
Online Interactions Not Rated by the ESRB

nintendo Wi-Fi connection

NINTENDO DS™

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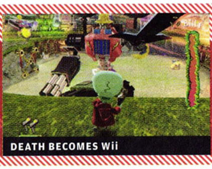


DEATH BECOMES Wii

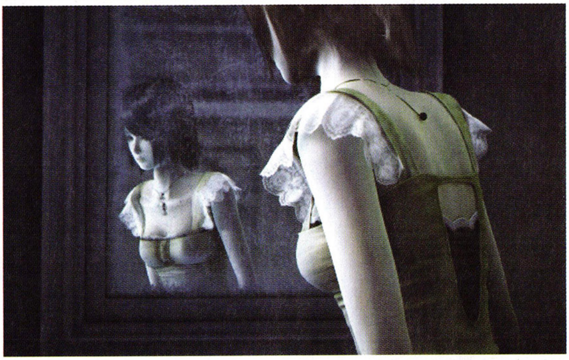
BACK TO THE BLEACH

EVERYTHING BUT THE KITCHEN SNK

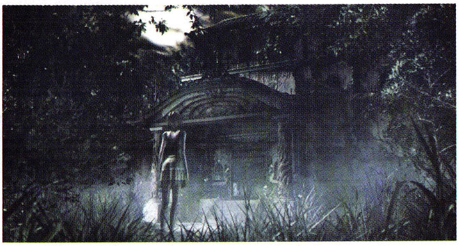
NEWS FROM JAPAN

Scream Team

Tecmo, Nintendo, and Grasshopper Manufacture join forces for a Wii-exclusive frightfest, Fatal Frame: The Mask of the Lunar Eclipse.



Following in the giant-sized footsteps of Monster Hunter, another major Japanese-developed franchise is making the jump to Wii exclusivity: Tecmo's bone-chilling Fatal Frame. Even more surprising is that the project will be a mega-collaboration between Tecmo, Nintendo, and Grasshopper Manufacture (of No More Heroes fame). Series veterans Shibata Makoto and Keisuke Kikuchi (of Tecmo) will direct and produce, respectively, while Suda 51 and the talented folks at Grasshopper handle the rest of the development duties. Nintendo will publish the game in Japan, as well as lend its support on the development side.

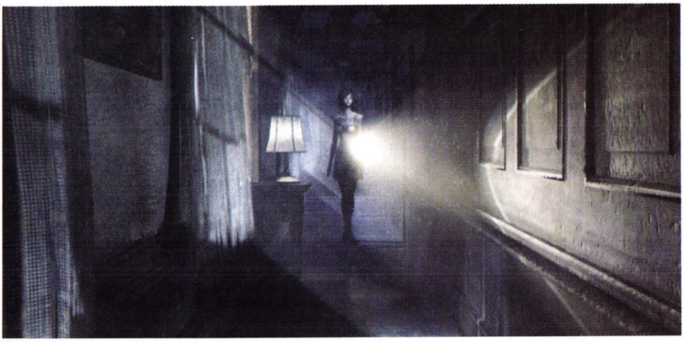


For those unfamiliar with the series, it's one of gaming's most legitimately terrifying survival-horror experiences. Players combat ghosts not with firearms or high-tech weaponry, but a special camera capable of capturing the restless spirits. And to ensure that you'll need an extra pair of underpants handy, you're encouraged to take a Fatal Frame shot moments before the enemy attacks. The series has a distinct Japanese-horror-movie flavor, and typically features some very uncomfortable situations.

Specific details on the latest installment remain scarce, though at a recent press conference in Tokyo, Kikuchi revealed that the key words for the game are "memory," "moon," and "mask," and that the image color for the game is yellow. And really, what more could you possibly need to know?

Fatal Frame: The Mask of the Lunar Eclipse is slated for a summer 2008 release in Japan. A US release has yet to be announced, but given the high-profile partnership, we'd be shocked if the game didn't make it here eventually.

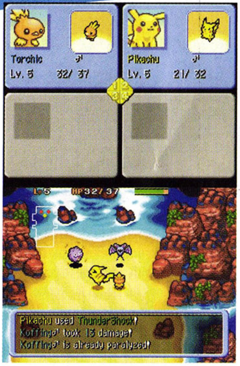
—STEVE T.



EXPLORATION DATE

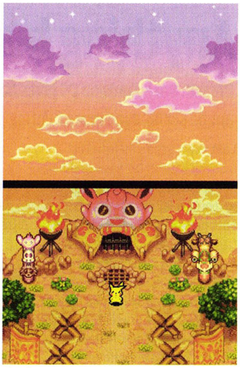
New Mysteries

Return to the enchanting world of talking Pokémon with Pokémon Mystery Dungeon: Explorers of Time and Pokémon Mystery Dungeon: Explorers of Darkness.



Pikachu used Thunder Shock!
Koffing took 13 damage!
Koffing is already paralyzed!

[Above] We're not sure what the deal is with this mountain, but we're guessing it doesn't get many visitors.



[Right] The Wigglytuff Guild is the hub of exploration activities in Treasure Town, including mission requests.

Pokémon and Chunsoft have unveiled a new chapter in the Pokémon Mystery Dungeon series. Pokémon Mystery Dungeon: Explorers of Time and Pokémon Mystery Dungeon: Explorers of Darkness return players to an intriguing universe where only Pokémon exist. Once again, you'll play directly as a Pokémon (or rather, a human who has been turned into a Pokémon) instead of a Trainer, a unique aspect of the Pokémon Mystery Dungeon franchise.

The story begins when you wake up in a strange new world, only to find another Pokémon in need of help nearby. After you help the Pokémon, it'll be by your side as you begin a new adventure that will take you through an enormous world of randomly generated dungeons. You'll be able to find, battle, and recruit nearly every kind of Pokémon during your quests, but a handful of unique Pokémon in each version are available only by exchanging certain missions with other players. Fans of the first Pokémon Mystery Dungeon titles will recognize many of the gameplay elements, such as special items, Linked Moves, and Friend Rescues, but there will be plenty of new features for everyone to experience.

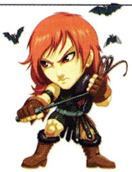
If you pre-order the game, you'll receive a special Dungeon Explorer's Guide that gives you quite a bit of insight into the upcoming adventure, including profiles of notable Pokémon. And if that's not enough Pokémon love, Cartoon Network will be debuting a Pokémon Mystery Dungeon TV special during the weekend prior to the game's April 21st launch (check www.Pokémon.com for details). —CHRIS SH.

*2007 Pokémon. *1995-2007 Nintendo/Creatures Inc./GAME FREAK inc. *1993-2007 CHUNSOFT.

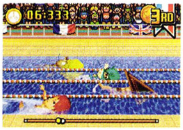
WHIP THE COMPETITION

On the Right Track

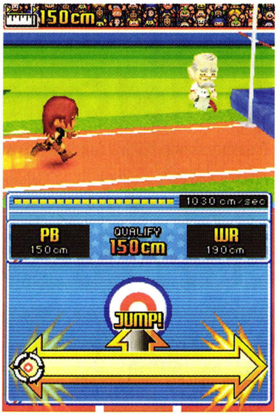
Details emerge on Konami's New International Track & Field for DS, including confirmation of a North American release.



Previously announced for a European release, the upcoming DS installment of the long-running Track & Field franchise has been confirmed by Konami to hit North America in 2008.



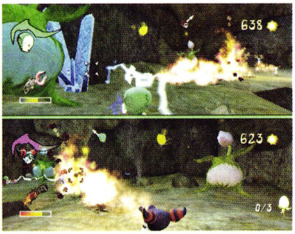
As with previous games in the series, New International Track & Field contains a wide array of Olympic-style sporting events—24 in all—including sprinting, archery, weight lifting, pole vaulting, javelin throwing, kayaking, swimming, and long-jumping. Unlike other games in the series, this one lets you use the touch screen to play. The game also features several classic Konami characters as playable athletes, such as Simon Belmont (from Castlevania), Pyramid Head (from Silent Hill 2), Evil Rose (from Rumble Roses), and Pentarou (from Paradius); each will have his or her own themed challenges to conquer. Sumo Digital (makers of Sega Superstars Tennis) is handling the game's development, while Udon Entertainment (known for the Street Fighter comic books) is providing the character designs. —CHRIS H.



TENACIOUS D.J.

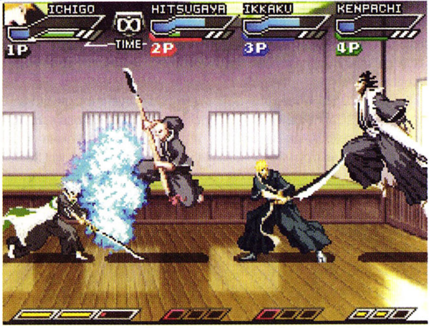
Death Mettle

With Death Jr.: The Root of Evil on Wii, Eidos gives Death's little boy a second chance.



If you think you've heard of Death Jr.: Root of Evil before, you probably have: developer Backbone's game was released on the PSP two years ago. Back then, of course, it didn't have motion controls or the split-screen co-op of publisher Eidos's newly announced Wii version. The story remains the same: Death has been kidnapped by Furi—an evil woodland nymph that Death Jr. (D.J. to his friends) and his girlfriend Pandora accidentally released while researching a biology project—and it's up to the deadly duo to use a variety of weaponry to scythe and whip and shoot their way through 19 levels to rescue the Grim Reaper. Eidos claims that the Wii allows them to improve the camera and the combat using the Wii remote. It certainly sounds promising, but we'll wait until we get some hands-on time with the game to verify that. Look for Death Jr.: Root of Evil this spring. —JUSTIN C.

NO CLOROX



The new tag-team matches help change the dynamics of the multiplayer experience. And to differentiate yourself during online matches, you can pick and edit your own personal avatar icon.

Anything but Hollow

Bleach: Dark Souls on DS gives hardcore fans of the hit anime series even more fighting goodness.

Last year, Sega's Bleach: The Blade of Fate on DS was something of a surprise hit for many—licensed games usually aren't very good, but The Blade of Fate bucked the trend, earning an impressive 8.5 from us. With the sequel, Bleach: Dark Souls, developer Treasure improves the already-solid fighting mechanics of its predecessor while adding a slew of new features. Combat is tweaked with rebalanced fighters, powerful new Bankai moves, more Spirit Cards, and new Reiju Crystals that alter your attacks, defenses, and health. Additionally, there are now 44 characters in total, and there's an all-new exclusive storyline that takes place between seasons 1 and 2 of the TV show. Those who prefer fighting with friends can participate in the four-person multiplayer modes—via either Wi-Fi or local wireless—that now support tag-team matches. You'll have to wait till summer for the game's release, but you can hone your skills by playing the first Bleach game in the meantime. —JUSTIN C.

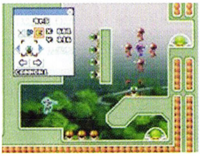
UNBURIED TREASURE

Spirited Comeback

Treasure brings back a cult favorite with Bangai-O Spirits on DS.

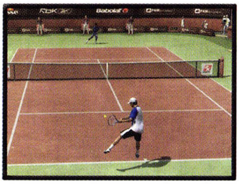
If there's a single genre developer Treasure is famous for, it's the shooter. From Ikaruga on GCN to Gunstar Super Heroes on GBA, Treasure's track record speaks for itself. But there's one game on Treasure's résumé that you may not have heard of: Bangai-O. Originally a Japanese-only N64 title, Bangai-O hit the States on the Sega Dreamcast seven years ago. Virtually all of those that played the highly explosive 2-D shooter adored it, which is why the impending North American release of Bangai-O Spirits for DS is so exciting for die-hard fans. Treasure has reimagined the original game to take advantage of the DS hardware, adding new levels and features, such as a level editor, four-person multiplayer, and MP3 support. Your edited levels become MP3 sound files, and you transfer them to your friend's DS by playing the sound into the other DS's microphone (think an old-school modem). —JUSTIN C.

The North American version is on track for a Q2 2008 release.

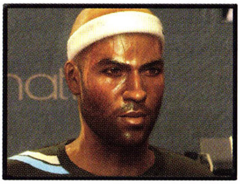


ARE YOU UP TO THE CHALLENGE?
2K SPORTS
TOPSPIN 3
2K SPORTS

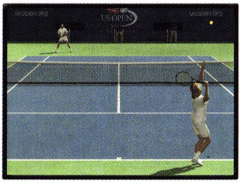
IN STORES MAY 2008



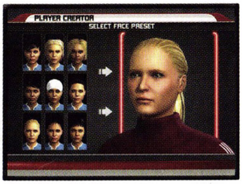
Easy to "Pick Up & Play" - Simple controls provide players with incredibly exciting, action-packed fun right from the start!



Evolutionary Visuals™ - Watch in real time as your players get progressively hotter, sweatier, and dirtier while competing at breathtaking venues.



Classic Legendary Players - For the 1st time ever play as your favorite pros from the past including Björn Borg, Boris Becker, and Monica Seles.



Unrivalled Player Creator - Create a player and make it your own with custom swing animations, a NEW free-form sculpting tool, and much more!

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BITS OF TID

Even More Questing

The sequel to Puzzle Quest goes sci-fi.

Regardless of how you feel about the original Puzzle Quest, it was a hit—so much so, in fact, that D3PA has a sequel on the way. Puzzle Quest: Galactrix on DS takes a sci-fi approach, with futuristic space combat and Bejeweled-esque puzzles aplenty.

Knowing Is Half the Battle

G.I. Joe highlights the EA-Hasbro collaboration.

Electronic Arts has confirmed that it's working on a game based on G.I. Joe, set for release on unspecified platforms in time for the 2009 G.I. Joe feature film. More immediately, EA will be publishing Wii and DS games based on Hasbro's Littlest Pet Shop and NERF N-Strike properties, both due this fall.

Gridiron Gang

EA Sports gives Wii the ol' college try with NCAA Football 09.

The GameCube didn't get a lot of NCAA love, but it looks like things will be different for Wii. EA Sports recently announced that NCAA Football 09 will be coming to Nintendo's little white console, complete with the simplified Family Play options found in the publisher's other Wii sports titles. In other pigskin news, EA recently came to terms with the NFL to extend its exclusive video game licensing agreement through the 2012 season (the current deal was set to expire after 2009).

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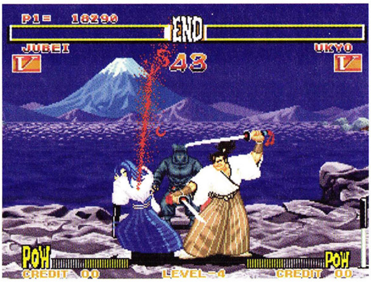
100 MEGA SHOCK!

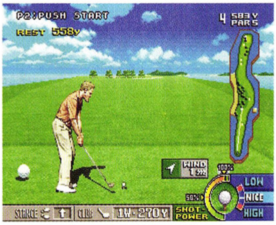
Neo World Order

SNK Playmore brings 16 NeoGeo hits to Wii on one disc with SNK Arcade Classics Vol. 1.

1P- 00268500
TIME
82
CREDITS 03
CREDITS 04

Back in the '90s, arcade-perfect home versions of SNK's NeoGeo games such as King of Fighters and Metal Slug cost literally hundreds of dollars. This fall, you'll be able to get 16 of those titles on one Wii disc (for the price of a single game, naturally) courtesy of SNK Playmore. Whether you're taking on the toughs of Southtown in one-on-one combat in Fatal Fury, enjoying America's favorite pastime in Baseball Stars 2, or tossing around foes in the dual-planed side-scrolling action of Top Hunter, you'll be enjoying coin-op gaming at its finest in SNK Arcade Classics Vol. 1. Although several of the games (including Art of Fighting, King of Fighters '94, World Heroes, Metal Slug, and Magician Lord) have already been released on Wii through Virtual Console or other means, SNK Arcade Classics gives them to you in one convenient package, along with several other games that, as of press time, are not yet available on the system. You'll pound punks in Burning Fight, slice and dice waves of foes in Sengoku, blow away an enemy army in Shock Troopers, blast through space in Last Resort, brawl through cities in King of the Monsters, and duel blade-to-blade in Samurai Shodown. Sports fans can enjoy hitting the links in Neo Turf Masters and shooting for the goal in Super Sidekicks 3. All 16 games should be arcade-perfect ports, and will feature fully customizable controls that can be mapped to any button on the Wii remote, nunchuk, or Classic controller. —CHRIS H.





SNK Arcade Classics Vol. 1 lets you slice arteries in Samurai Shodown and slice on the green in Neo Turf Masters.

IN YOUR FACE

Ready to Rumble

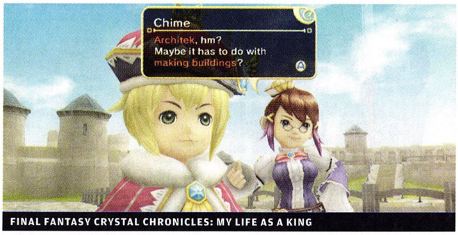
EA's FaceBreaker for Wii brings fun back to the boxing ring.

EA is known for making one of the best boxing games ever: Fight Night Round 3. But as undoubtedly great as Fight Night was, its realism meant that it lacked the arcade-y fun of, say, Super Punch-Out!! on SNES. Enter EA's FaceBreaker, a decidedly cartoony boxing game with characters like Molotov, who EA says is "an oversized Russian demolitions expert with a penchant for fighting dirty," and Romeo, "a Latin lover known for his pelvic thrusts." Stereotypical? Sure, but it's all in the name of fun. If you would rather play as yourself, the Photo Game Face makes it possible—just upload a photo to create a character in your likeness. Of course, that will probably make it all the more painful when you get hit with a haymaker, especially thanks to the game's "real-time facial deformation" (hence the title). Expect more details in the coming months. —JUSTIN C.

WHERE?

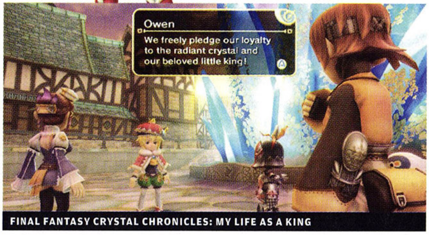
WiiWare Is (Almost) Here

The downloadable games channel will hit your Wii on May 12.



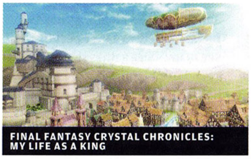
Chime
Architek, hm?
Maybe it has to do with making buildings?

FINAL FANTASY CRYSTAL CHRONICLES: MY LIFE AS A KING



Owen
We freely pledge our loyalty to the radiant crystal and our beloved little king!

FINAL FANTASY CRYSTAL CHRONICLES: MY LIFE AS A KING



FINAL FANTASY CRYSTAL CHRONICLES: MY LIFE AS A KING

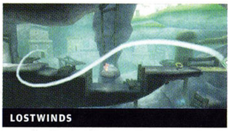
Right as we were going to press, Nintendo announced at the Game Developers Conference that the first WiiWare games would be made available in North America on May 12. Two WiiWare titles were announced (see below), plus an episodic series from Telltale Games (the developers of the episodic Sam & Max PC games). Sadly, Nintendo did not show any of the first-party WiiWare titles that were previously announced in Japan (such as Dr. Mario's Virus Buster—see Nintendo Power V223). We'll keep you posted.

Final Fantasy Crystal Chronicles: My Life as a King

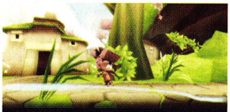
Square Enix's latest Final Fantasy Crystal Chronicles game isn't exactly what you'd expect—it's more SimCity than Final Fantasy. Taking place after the events of the first Crystal Chronicles, My Life as a King has you taking on the role of a king who uses the power of the crystals to build a kingdom.

LostWinds

LostWinds, the latest game from Frontier Developments (Thrillville), is a 2.5-D platformer with a twist: you play as two characters at once. With the nunchuk, you control the young Toku who's trying to save his world from the curse of the evil Balasar. With the Wii remote, you control Enril the wind spirit, allowing you to draw onscreen with the remote to aid Toku on his journey. —JUSTIN C.



LOSTWINDS



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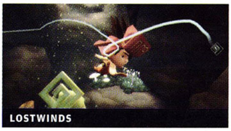

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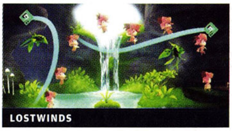
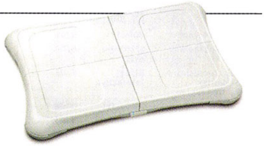


LOSTWINDS

GET ON BOARD

Get Ready to Get Fit!

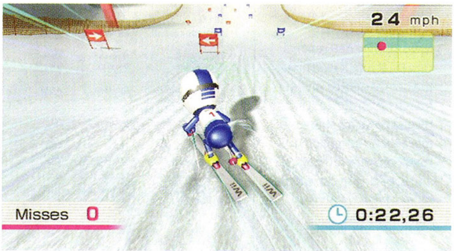
Nintendo's newest Wii craze begins in May.

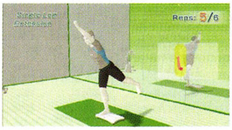


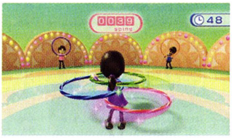
Since we last reported on Wii Fit—Nintendo's innovative software and Wii Balance Board combo—it's become a phenomenon in Japan, selling 1.4 million units in just its first three months. But while players in Shibuya were enjoying aerobics, yoga, balance games, and strength training, we've been left to ponder when the game will hit stores here in the US. Well, wonder no longer, fitness fans: Wii Fit reaches our shores on May 19th.

Nintendo also announced that publishers have begun working on games that will make further use of the Wii Balance Board, and that the Wii Fit package will even include its own dedicated Wii channel, which users can quickly check out every day to track their Wii Fit Age and BMI.

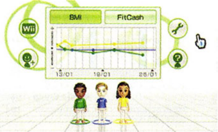
We've been sweating with Wii Fit ourselves and should have more to report next issue. —CHRIS SL.







Whether you're serious about getting in shape or just want to goof around and have fun, Wii Fit's many modes have you covered.



GAME WATCH FORECAST

Lots of games on the list, but not too many new titles being announced this month. As it gets further into the year, expect to see many more games revealed.

Wii		
Active Life: Outdoor Challenge	Namco Bandai	SUM 08
Alone in the Dark	Atari	3/08
BlastWorks: Build, Trade, Destroy	Majesco	5/08
Boom Blox	Electronic Arts	SUM 08
Brothers in Arms: Road to Hill 30	Ubisoft	3/08
Bully: Scholarship Edition	Rockstar Games	3/08
Castle of Shikigami III	Aksys	4/08
Catch of the Day	Electronic Arts	6/08
The Chronicles of Narnia: Prince Caspian	Disney Interactive	5/08
Cocoto Magic Circus	Conspiracy	Q1 08
Cooking Mama Cook Off 2	Majesco	6/08
de Blob	THQ	6/08
Death Jr.: Root of Evil	Eidos	Q2 08
Deca Sports*	Hudson	SUM 08
The Destiny of Zorro	Pronto Games	TBA
Destroy All Humans! Big Willy Unleashed	THQ	3/08
Disaster: Day of Crisis	Nintendo	TBA
The Dog Island	Ubisoft	5/08
Don King Presents: Prizefighter	Take-Two Interactive	SPR 08
Dragonology	Codemasters	Q4 08
Emergency Heroes	Ubisoft	3/08
Emergency Mayhem	Codemasters	4/08
FaceBreaker	Electronic Arts	2008
Final Fantasy Crystal Chronicles: Crystal Bearers	Square Enix	TBA
Ford Racing Off Road	Empire Interactive	6/08
Ghostbusters	Sierra	TBA
Heavenly Guardian	UFO Interactive	3/08
The House of the Dead 2&3: Return	Sega	SPR 08
Indoor Sports	Konami	TBA
Iron Man	Sega	5/08
King of Fighters: The Orochi Saga	SNK Playmore	5/08
Kung Fu Panda	Activision	SPR 08
LEGO Batman: The Videogame	Warner Bros. Interactive	2008
LEGO Indiana Jones: The Videogame	LucasArts	SPR 08
Line Rider	InXille	SPR 08
Littlest Pet Shop	Electronic Arts	FALL 08
Mario Kart Wii	Nintendo	SPR 08
MiniCopter: Adventure Flight	Aksys	3/08
MLB 2K8	2K Games	SPR 08
The Monkey King: The Legend Begins	UFO Interactive	4/08
Monster Lab	Eidos	SUM 08
Mushroom Men	Gamecock Media Group	FALL 08
Myth Makers: Super Kart GP	Conspiracy	TBA
NCAA Football 09	EA Sports	7/08
NERF N-Strike	Electronic Arts	FALL 08
Ninja Reflex	Electronic Arts	3/08
Obscure: The Aftermath	Ignition	3/08
Octopuzzle	Atlus/ Conspiracy	TBA
Okami	Capcom	3/08
Opoona	Koei	3/08
Pinball Hall of Fame: The Williams Collection	Crave	3/08
Pro Evolution Soccer 2008	Konami	4/08
Rebel Raiders	XS Games	3/08
Runaway	Focus Home Interactive	TBA
Rygar: The Battle of Argus	Tecmo	6/08
Samba de Amigo	Sega	SPR 08
Sega Superstars Tennis	Sega	3/08
Sid Meier's Civilization Revolution	2K Games	9/08
SNK Arcade Classics Vol. 1	SNK Playmore	4/08
Speed Racer	Warner Bros. Interactive	5/08
Spore	Electronic Arts	TBA
Star Wars: The Force Unleashed	LucasArts	SUM 08
Summer Sports	Destineer	3/08
Super Pick Ups	XS Games	4/08
Super Smash Bros. Brawl	Nintendo	3/08
Target: Terror	Konami	3/08
TNA iMPACT!	Midway	TBA
Top Spin 3	2K Sports	SPR 08
Wall-E	THQ	6/08
We Love Golf!	Capcom	TBA
Wii Fit	Nintendo	Q2 08
Wild Earth: African Safari	Majesco	4/08
Wizardology	Codemasters	Q4 08
Wonderworld Amusement Park	Majesco	6/08
Worms: A Space Oddity	THQ	3/08
NINTENDO DS		
1 vs. 100	DSI Games	5/08
Alone in the Dark	Atari	3/08
Bangai-O Spirits	D3 Publisher	Q2 08
Bleach: Dark Souls	Sega	SUM 08
Brave	SouthPeak Interactive	TBA
Broken Sword	Ubisoft	3/08
Catch of the Day	Electronic Arts	6/08
The Chronicles of Narnia: Prince Caspian	Disney Interactive	5/08
Commando	XS Games	3/08
Crosswords DS	Nintendo	5/08
de Blob	THQ	Q1 08
Diary Girl	Konami	3/08
Dinosaur King	Sega	SUM 08
Disciples II	Strategy First	3/08
Disney Friends	Disney Interactive	3/08
Don King Presents: Prizefighter	Take-Two Interactive	Q2 08
Doodle Hex	TBA	TBA
Double Sequence	DSI Games	3/08
Dragonology	Codemasters	Q4 08
Drone Tactics	Atlus	3/08
Eco-Creatures: Save the Forest	Majesco	3/08
Final Fantasy IV	Square Enix	TBA
Final Fantasy Crystal Chronicles: Ring of Fates	Square Enix	3/08
Final Fantasy Tactics A2: The Sealed Grimoire	Square Enix	TBA
Garfield Fun Fest	DSI Games	5/08
Go Pets	Konami	3/08
GRID	Codemasters	Q2 08
Harvest Moon DS Cute	Natsume	3/08
Harvest Moon: Island of Happiness	Natsume	6/08
Imagine: Figure Skater	Ubisoft	3/08
Jake Hunter: Detective Chronicles	Aksys	5/08
LEGO Indiana Jones: The Videogame	LucasArts	Q2 08
Let's Ride: Friends Forever	THQ	3/08
Line Rider	InXile	SPR 08
Littlest Pet Shop	Electronic Arts	FALL 08
Lost in Blue 3	Konami	3/08
Mushroom Men: Rise of the Fungi	Gamecock Media Group	Q2 08
My Life Coach	Ubisoft	3/08
My Weight Loss Coach	Ubisoft	Q3 08
Myst	Empire Interactive	3/08
N+	Atari	3/08
Nancy Drew: The Mystery of the Clue Bender Society	Majesco	SUM 08
Naruto: Ninja Destiny	Tomy	3/08
NERF N-Strike	Electronic Arts	FALL 08
New International Track & Field	Konami	2008
Ninja Gaiden: Dragon Sword	Tecmo	3/08
Ninja Reflex	Electronic Arts	3/08
Ninjatown	SouthPeak Interactive	TBA
Crosswords DS	Nintendo	TBA
Organize It	Summitsoft	5/08
Pet Shop	Ubisoft	3/08
Petz Bunnyz	Ubisoft	3/08
PipeMania	Empire Interactive	6/08
Pirate Battle	Orbital Media	TBA
Plushees	Destineer	3/08
Pokémon Mystery Dungeon: Explorers of Darkness	Nintendo	Q2 08
Pokémon Mystery Dungeon: Explorers of Time	Nintendo	Q2 08
Prey the Stars	Koei	3/08
Pro Evolution Soccer 2008	Konami	3/08
Professor Branium's Games	Destineer	3/08
Project Exile	Graffiti	3/08
Puzzle Quest: Galactrix	D3PA	Q2 08
Quick Yoga Training	Ubisoft	4/08
River King: Mystic Valley	Natsume	3/08
Robo-Revolt: Robocalypse Now	Vogster	SPR 08
Rondo of Swords	Atlus	4/08
Runaway: The Dream of the Turtle	Focus Home Interactive	TBA
Sega Superstars Tennis	Sega	3/08
Shining Stars	DSI Games	6/08
Sid Meier's Civilization Revolution	2K Games	4/08
Sonic Chronicles: The Dark Brotherhood	Sega	FALL 08
Spectrobes II	Disney Interactive	FALL 08
Speed Racer	Warner Bros. Interactive	5/08
Spore Creatures	Electronic Arts	9/08
Star Wars: The Force Unleashed	LucasArts	SPR 08
Super Dodgeball Brawlers	Aksys	4/08
Tamagotchi Connection: Corner Shop 3	Namco Bandai	SUM 08
Teenage Zombies: Invasion of the Alien Brain Thingys	Ignition	4/08
TrackMania DS	Focus Home Interactive	Q4 08
Viva Pinata DS	TBA	TBA
Warlords DS	Strategy First	TBA
Wizardology	Codemasters	Q4 08
The World Ends With You	Square Enix	TBA

NOTE: RELEASE DATES OFTEN CHANGE *TENTATIVE TITLE

BITS OF TID

Yes, More Hero

Keep on rockin' with Guitar Hero: Aerosmith.

Just a few months after the release of Guitar Hero III, Activision has announced Guitar Hero: Aerosmith for Wii. As you might expect, the game is completely Aerosmith-centric, allowing you to play some of the most important songs in the band's history. Look for Guitar Hero: Aerosmith on store shelves in June.

On the GRID

Build the world's next great racing circuit with Codemasters' GRID.

This summer, DS owners will have the opportunity to build their own race courses and share them with competitors from around the world courtesy of GRID from Codemasters and Firebrand Games. Building upon the robust track editor from Firebrand's previous effort—Race Driver: Create and Race—GRID promises near-limitless design options, right down to the trackside billboards.

Smart Money

Brain Age doctor gives up mad money.

News service AFP reports that Dr. Ryuta Kawashima, the neuroscientist made famous by Brain Age, has turned down his share of more than $22 million in royalties from sales of the game, opting to donate the money to his employer, Tohoku University.

CAN YOU SURVIVE THE DUNGEONS OF El DORADO?

MYSTERY DUNGEON
Shiren the Wanderer™

13F HP 45/ 55 Lv11 85016

Shiren took 7 damage from Inferno!

Randomly generated dungeons crawl with over 180 unique monsters to defeat

HP 103/103 Lv16 0G

Boy:
That Golden Condor stuff is superstition.
There's no way it exists!

Delve into engaging Quests and unravel the mystery of the Golden Condor

Shiren read the Blastwave Scroll!

Cast earth-shattering spells, even transform into different Beasts

Discover new items and weapons in epic environments

COMING MARCH 2008

EVERYONE E CONTENT RATED BY ESRB — Mild Fantasy Violence

nintendo Wi-Fi connection NINTENDO DS™ CHUN SOFT SEGA® www.sega.com

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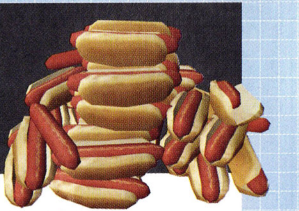
Ware It All Begins

Original downloadable WiiWare games are on their way to a console near you, and the Virtual Console hits keep on coming. So much to play, so little time.



7

VC Games

GO FAST, EAT FASTER

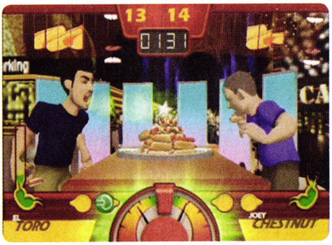
Hot on the heels of Nintendo's major WiiWare announcements (see pg. 17), we've got first looks at two more titles for the download service: Major League Eating: The Game and SPOGS Racing.

MAJOR LEAGUE EATING: THE GAME

Want a WiiWare game you can really sink your teeth into? Then look no further than Mastiff's Major League Eating: The Game. Based on the real-world competitive eating league (and featuring 11 of its top names as playable characters), MLE is all about cramming as much virtual food down your gullet as you can. Each of three categories of food is consumed in a different way. You lift the Wii remote upward toward your mouth to eat "stuffing" foods such as hamburgers, hot dogs, and pizza; you hold the remote sideways and twist it while moving it back and forth to eat "typewriter" foods such as corn and watermelon; and you flick the remote upward to throw and catch "popping" foods like shrimp and meatballs. Since this is a competition, however, eating the food is only half the battle—you'll also have to stay one step ahead of your opponent by using power-ups and counter-power-ups such as burps, antacid, mustard gas, spoiled food, and hot peppers (which can set your opponent on fire). Other gameplay features, including a momentum meter and a stomach gauge (which you must keep low lest you lose your lunch), add extra depth. You'll even be able to take the action online with versus play and leaderboards.

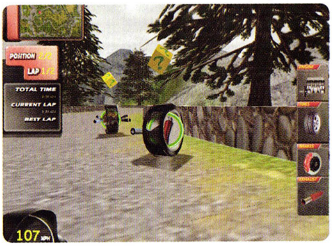
22 12
0:123
JANUS
JOEY CHESTNUT

6 3
0:142
CRAZY LEGS
EL TORO



SPOGS RACING

In driver's ed, they teach you that crashing into other vehicles is bad form. SPOGS Racing, from D2C Games, takes a different tack. By careening into your competitors' unusually shaped SPOGS Racers, you can take their parts—pre-owned engines, brakes, tailpipes, etc.—and use the spoils to upgrade your own ride. The automotive pick-pocketing takes place in a dozen venues, including traditional racing ovals, road courses, and stunt tracks. When you're not busy going SPOG-to-SPOG with rivals, you'll fly off ramps and negotiate loops (also not recommended in your driver's ed class). Obviously, the SPOGS Racers are not your parents' Camry. They're designed to spin, drift, flip over, and (most of all) crash a lot. They're also equipped with six kinds of weapons, which you can use to slow down your opponents so that you might mug them. The title uses your choice of three control schemes, one of which is what has become the standard for motion control in driving games—you hold the remote horizontally with both hands and tilt it to steer. In addition to quick races, you can enjoy the game in Battle mode (essentially a nonstop series of collisions) and Season mode (which sees you through races on every track).



VIRTUAL CONSOLE

STAFF PICK!

1080° SNOWBOARDING

PLATFORM: N64
PUBLISHER: NINTENDO
GENRE: SPORTS
ORIGINAL RELEASE: 1998

WHAT: Before there was SSX, there was the action of 1080° Snowboarding, with realistic physics and slopes.

WHY: Early 3-D at its best with great control. Though most of the game is realistic, the triple spin (1080°) is an unbelievably tricky move. —GS

ADVENTURES OF LOLO 2

PLATFORM: NES
PUBLISHER: HAL
GENRE: ACTION/PUZZLE
ORIGINAL RELEASE: 1990

WHAT: Just like the original Adventures of Lolo, Lolo 2 sends you through a series of tough puzzle-filled rooms. You'll push blocks, avoid enemies, and more.

WHY: If you like to use your brain as well as your reflexes, the Lolo series fits the bill. —CH

COLUMNS III: REVENGE OF COLUMNS

PLATFORM: SEGA GENESIS
PUBLISHER: SEGA/VIC TOKAI
GENRE: PUZZLE
ORIGINAL RELEASE: 1994

WHAT: Part three of Sega's popular puzzle franchise adds simultaneous play for up to five people, as well as an ultra-tough adventure mode.

WHY: You can't get enough of antiquated puzzle games and you enjoy a good thrashing. —ST

VIRTUAL CONSOLE SPOTLIGHT

STAFF PICK!

LORDS OF THUNDER

Steve T's Pick

PLATFORM: TURBOGRAFX CD
PUBLISHER: HUDSON
GENRE: SHOOTER
ORIGINAL RELEASE: 1993

The Turbo was a system known for its shooters, and Lords of Thunder is one of the best. Loaded with wailing electric-guitar licks and an over-the-top fantasy setting, the game is like a heavy-metal album cover come to life. The big, colorful sprites hold up nicely, and though it may lack the clinical precision of something like R-Type or Gradius, the action is sure to get your blood pumping.

VIRTUAL CONSOLE SPOTLIGHT

STAFF PICK!

SUPER STREET FIGHTER II: THE NEW CHALLENGERS

Chris H's Pick

PLATFORM: SUPER NES
PUBLISHER: CAPCOM
GENRE: FIGHTING
ORIGINAL RELEASE: 1994

Many fighting fans pick Street Fighter II Turbo as the definitive SNES iteration of the hit fighting franchise, but my vote goes to Super Street Fighter II. The reason: more characters (such as fan-favorite Cammy) and more moves add up to more fun. And that's on top of the most precise, responsive fighting around.

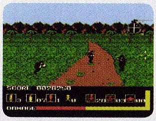
STAFF PICK!

HARVEST MOON

PLATFORM: SUPER NES
PUBLISHER: NATSUME
GENRE: RPG
ORIGINAL RELEASE: 1997

WHAT: The first chapter of everyone's favorite farming sim series puts you in the boots of a wide-eyed young man looking for love and a bumper crop of radishes.

WHY: It's an RPG without all that nonsense of slaying enemies and saving the world. It does, however, have a cheery art style, subtle humor, and compelling goals. And who wouldn't want a bumper crop of radishes? —GS



OPERATION WOLF

PLATFORM: NES
PUBLISHER: TAITO
GENRE: SHOOTER
ORIGINAL RELEASE: 1989

WHAT: The NES port of an arcade light-gun game in which you single-handedly blow away an enemy army with grenades and your trusty machine gun.

WHY: If you have fond memories of the arcade version and want to see them smashed. Unlike in the NES original, there's no Zapper compatibility; you move a cursor with the control pad, which ruins the experience. —CH

Meet Your Master

Sega and Nintendo recently announced that games from Sega's 8-bit systems—the Master System, Mark III, and Game Gear portable—will be coming to Virtual Console in Japan. As of press time, no decision has been made on whether the games will be available in North America, but in Japan the first releases will cost 600 Wii Points. The Sega Master System is best known for its groundbreaking RPG Phantasy Star.

PREVIEW

APRIL '08

Strategy and puzzle games highlight this month's cerebral previews section.

Band Mashups Pg. 22
Boom Blox Pg. 28
Civilization Revolution Pg. 24
Crosswords DS Pg. 26
Drone Tactics Pg. 28
Emergency Mayhem Pg. 26
Iron Man Pg. 30
Rondo of Swords Pg. 27
Spore: Creatures Pg. 23

Battle of the Bands

> BAND MASHUPS

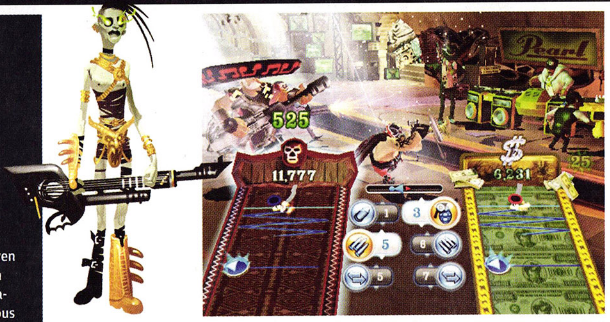
PLATFORM: **Wii** • PUBLISHER: **THQ**
DEVELOPER: **PLANET MOON** • RELEASE: **APRIL 2008**

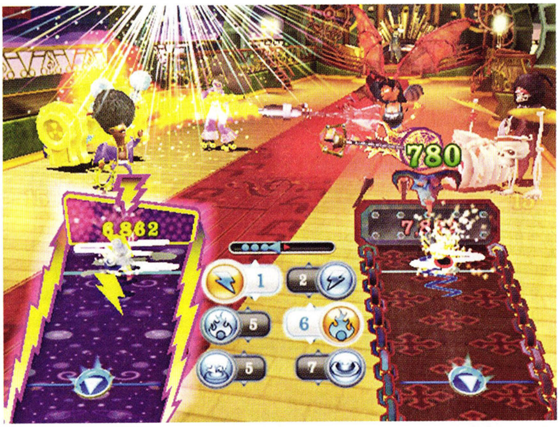
If you're like me and have always felt that LL Cool J's "Mama Said Knock You Out" could be even more rousing with some fierce fiddle work, then Band Mashups is the game for you. This imaginative music title from Planet Moon (whose previous works include similarly inspired fare like Armed and Dangerous and Giants: Citizen Kabuto) takes 30 licensed songs and gives players the opportunity to perform them in five different genres: rock, hip hop/funk, country, Latin, and marching band. You'll be competing for musical supremacy against another band, however, and whoever performs better will get to play their version of the song longer. Think of it as a melodic tug-of-war.

The core mechanics are similar to those in other rhythm games. As notes scroll up from the bottom of the screen, the player must input commands to the beat of the music. In this instance, though, you'll be moving the Wii remote: flicking it left, right, and down, stabbing it toward the screen, and shaking it with various degrees of vigor. The controls felt extremely accurate during our play test, and it was nice to know that if we messed up, we had no one to blame but ourselves.

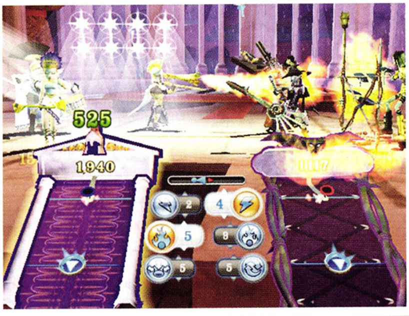
Taking the battle-of-the-bands concept to its most literal conclusion, the game also allows you to attack your opponent with various weapons by successfully hitting a certain number of consecutive beats. Doing so will earn you extra points, help you gain control of the music, and can even wreak havoc with the other band's scroll by speeding it up, reversing the notes, etc. To protect yourself from an incoming attack, you simply press B to block, but that means you've got to keep an eye on your opponent while trying to focus on your own performance. It's incredibly hectic, but also immensely satisfying once you get the hang of it

Of course, a rhythm game is only as good as its song list, and there too, Band Mashups impresses. You've got everything from Soundgarden's "Spoonman" to Kool & the Gang's "Jungle Boogie" to the awesome "Man of Constant Sorrow" from *O Brother Where Art Thou*. And I dare say you haven't lived until you've heard "Insane in the Brain" as performed by a marching band. Fortunately, that April release date is just around the corner. —STEVE T.





Someone took "let me stand next to your fire" a bit too literally.



Next time you consider picking on a band geek, keep in mind that his trombone might double as a flamethrower.

Creature Feature

>SPORE: CREATURES

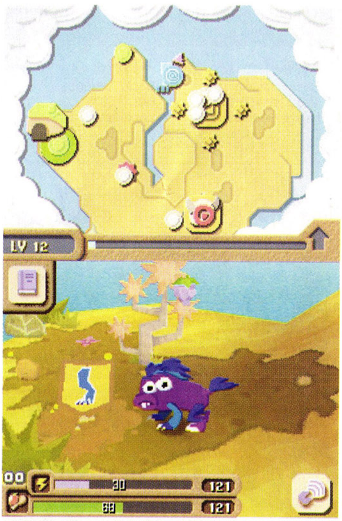
PLATFORM: **DS** • PUBLISHER: **ELECTRONIC ARTS**
DEVELOPER: **MAXIS** • RELEASE: **2008**

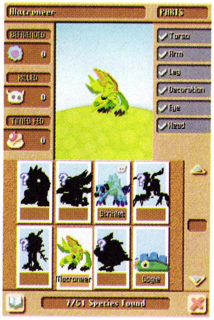
Following the evolution of an entire civilization from single-cell organisms to space-faring conquerors, Spore, the latest creation from "creation game" mastermind Will Wright (SimCity, The Sims), is easily one of the most ambitious games ever. Given its complexity and scope, however, there seemed to be little chance of it landing on a DS card. Well, it's officially on the way...in the form of a clever side story that's part Pokémon, part Custom Robo, part The Sims, and all built from the ground up for the handheld. Titled Spore: Creatures, the game focuses on letting players' imaginations run wild in creating the most unique beasts we've ever seen. It's not merely a virtual petting zoo, though—there's a story, combat, alliance building, and more, all totally touch-driven.

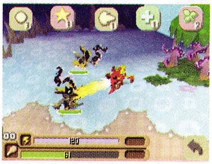
Using the DS stylus to guide your creature—much like controlling Link's path in The Phantom Hourglass—you'll traverse weird and wild lands, visit multiple planets, and even participate in Elite Beat Agents-style minigames. The goal: locate the spaceship parts required for rescuing your kidnapped friend. Along the way, you'll need to befriend some creatures and do battle with others. Whether you make pals or emerge victorious from combat, you'll gain specialized body parts from other species to aid you on your quest.

At the game's heart is the impressive Creature Editor, which the developers spent an entire six months on alone. Here you can mix and match eyes, mouths, arms, legs, bodies, and more to evolve your creature and tackle various scenarios. For instance, you may need arms to toss boulders and impress another species. Once they're befriended, you'll earn their legs, which are necessary to cross an otherwise-deadly form of terrain. Better eyes will let you see spots where you can dig (by rubbing the touch screen) and hopefully find one of each planet's 10 exploration collectibles. A better mouth will boost your digestive system, providing you with more energy from the food you eat (whether it's shaken from a tree or torn from fallen enemies). Certain parts will bestow your creature with special attacks to use during combat. These complement the basic slash you can perform using the stylus, but drain energy when activated.

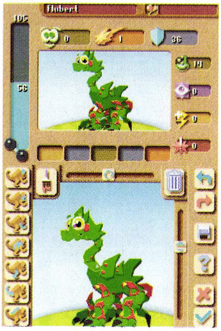
The developers at Maxis say that their three design goals are "creativity, collecting, and sharing." From what we've played so far, they've definitely got creativity nailed, and passing around your beasts to see what direction your friends take them seems like a nice addition. If the exploration turns out anywhere near as compelling as the creation element, this could emerge as one of the most weird and wonderful additions to the DS's library. —RANDY N.



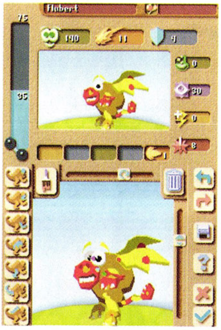


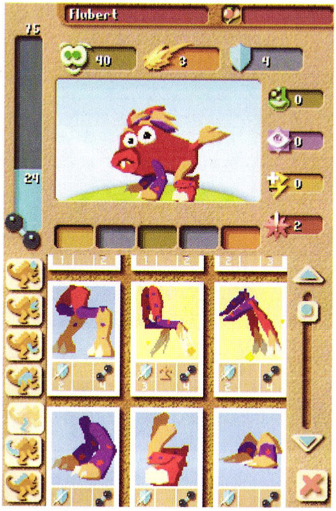


[Right] It can be a rough world out there, and your creature will sometimes have to fight to survive.



Share your creations with friends and see how they customize them.





You can edit virtually every part, so you can create pretty much any type of creature imaginable. Your creature will evolve as the game progresses, which can change its appearance even more.

Pocket History

>CIVILIZATION REVOLUTION

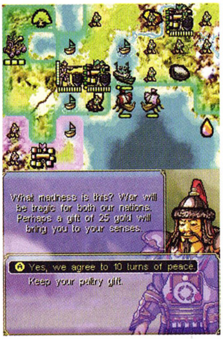
PLATFORM: **DS** • PUBLISHER: **2K GAMES**
DEVELOPER: **FIRAXIS** • RELEASE: **SPRING 2008**

Far too often, popular PC and console franchises are dumbed down on their way to the portable market. This is especially true of properties with a strategic bent. For whatever reason, publishers don't seem to think we want deep and involving strategy in our handheld titles, and so they'll frequently farm out these projects to second-tier developers in the hopes of making a quick buck. Fortunately, Sid Meier's beloved Civilization series has been spared this terrible fate. With Meier's own development studio behind it, the forthcoming Civilization Revolution for DS is the real deal, a full-fledged Civ experience that you can take on the go.

First, a brief summary for the uninitiated: players choose a civilization (America, Japan, Africa, etc.) and lead it through a turn-based history, beginning with ancient times and spanning all the way into the near future. You'll construct cities, research new technologies, engage in diplomacy with other civilizations, and—only if necessary, of course—wage war. You're given complete freedom to shepherd your civilization as you see fit, and "victory" comes in myriad forms. You might conquer the world with a military dictatorship during one play session then guide a liberal democracy to cultural domination the next.

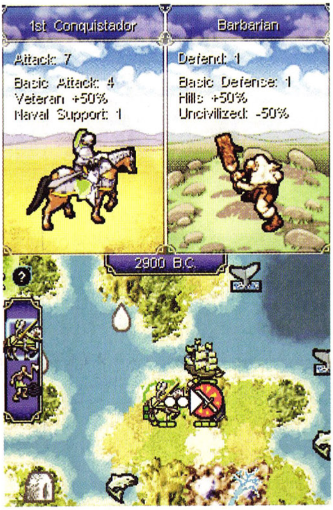
Building on that tried-and-true formula, Civilization Revolution introduces a number of features that are new to the series. While exploring the globe, you can now find ancient artifacts that bestow your civilization with significant advantages. Locating Atlantis, for example, will grant you technological advancements, while discovering the Knights Templar will boost your military might. Speaking of which, evolving combat has been an area of particular emphasis for Revolution's developers. For starters, you can now combine up to three units of the same type into one powerful army, which opens additional tactical considerations. Armies may be much more difficult to defeat than individual units, but devoting so many resources to a single force can limit your military options. Another new wrinkle is that you can elect to retreat during battle if your combatants appear overmatched, though doing so will cede the space to the enemy and give them experience points. (Units can level up to earn special bonuses, such as extra attack power versus cities or expanded movement range.) The role of naval units in battle has been modified, as well; certain vessels now serve as support units, bombarding cities during an attack.

Revolution will also boast Wi-Fi functionality, including online play and a Game of the Week in which players download a new map designed by Firaxis then upload their scores to see how they measure up to other players from around the country. It all seems to be coming together nicely. And perhaps most importantly, that "just one more turn" addiction Civ players know so well should be much easier on the rump when you can play while lying in bed. —**STEVE T.**



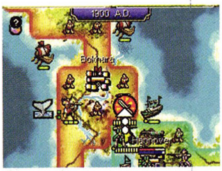
What madness is this? War will be tragic for both our nations. Perhaps a gift of 25 gold will bring you to your senses.

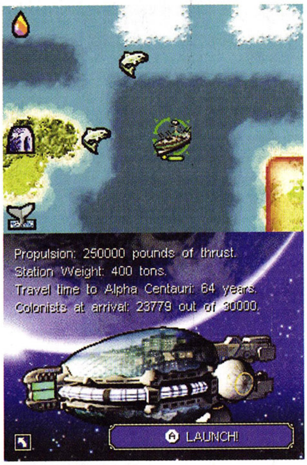
Ⓐ Yes, we agree to 10 turns of peace.
Keep your paltry gift.



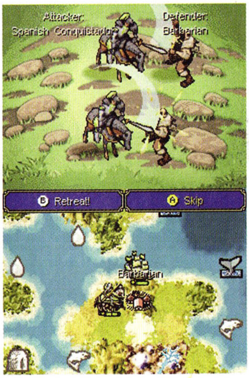
Attack: 7
Basic Attack: 4
Veteran +50%
Naval Support: 1

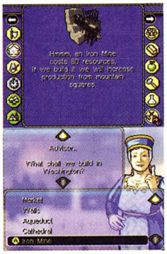
Defend: 1
Basic Defence: 1
Hills +50%
Uncivilized: -50%





Propulsion: 250000 pounds of thrust.
Station Weight: 400 tons.
Travel time to Alpha Centauri: 64 years.
Colonists at arrival: 23779 out of 30000.





Hmmm, an Iron Mine costs 80 resources, If we build it we will increase production from mountain squares.

Advisor...

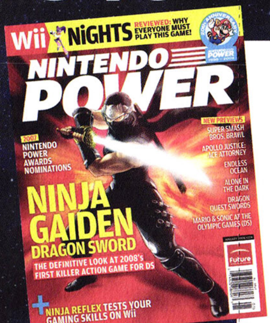
What shall we build in Washington?

Market
Walls
Aqueduct
Cathedral
Ⓐ Iron Mine

Achieve Maximum Power

Super Mario Galaxy© 2007 Nintendo.

SAVE 66%


Wii
NiGHTS
REVIEWED: WHY EVERYONE MUST PLAY THIS GAME!
NINTENDO POWER
2007 NINTENDO POWER AWARDS NOMINATIONS
NEW PREVIEWS
SUPER SMASH BROS. BRAWL
APOLLO JUSTICE: ACE ATTORNEY
ENDLESS OCEAN
ALONE IN THE DARK
DRAGON QUEST SWORDS
MARIO & SONIC AT THE OLYMPIC GAMES (DS)
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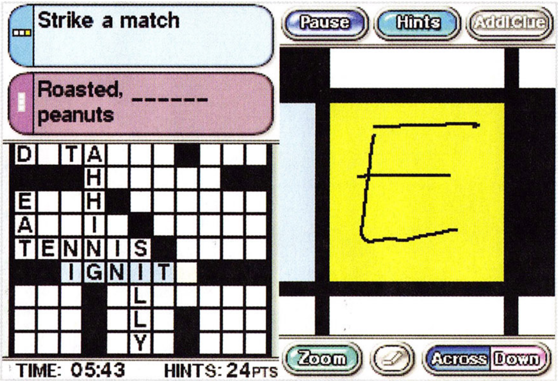
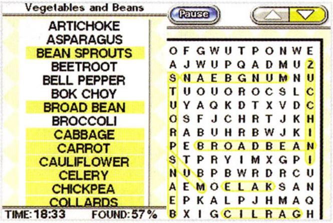
Word Play

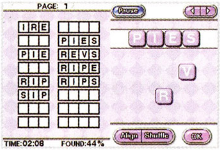
>CROSSWORDS DS

PLATFORM: **DS** • PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO**
DEVELOPER: **NUEVO** • RELEASE: **MAY 2008**

Crossword puzzles found in magazines and newspapers can be dense and inaccessible, especially for the inexperienced. Not so with Crosswords DS—the game has enough variety that anyone can play. Boasting hundreds of puzzles of numerous sizes and four difficulty settings, Crosswords DS uses handwriting recognition so you can write your answers on the DS's touch screen. Lefties needn't worry; although you turn the system sideways to play, you can select left- or right-handed configurations. The game is especially friendly for novices; you can be notified whenever you make an incorrect entry, and reveal letters or even whole words if you really get stuck. Despite its title, the game contains a lot more than crossword puzzles, too. In word-search mode, you'll seek out and highlight themed words from a jumble of letters using the touch screen, and in anagram mode you'll drag and drop sets of up to six letters to create as many words as possible. A training mode ensures that your skills are up to snuff, and you can save your puzzle progress at any time, making it perfect for quick pick-up-and-play sessions. —**CHRIS H.**


Strike a match
Roasted, ______ peanuts
Pause
Hints
Add'l.Clue
Zoom
Across
Down
TIME: 05:43
HINTS: 24PTS


Vegetables and Beans
Pause
ARTICHOKE
ASPARAGUS
BEAN SPROUTS
BEETROOT
BELL PEPPER
BOK CHOY
BROAD BEAN
BROCCOLI
CABBAGE
CARROT
CAULIFLOWER
CELERY
CHICKPEA
COLLARDS
TIME: 18:33
FOUND: 57%


PAGE: 1
Pause
PIES
Align
Shuffle
OK
TIME: 02:08
FOUND: 44%

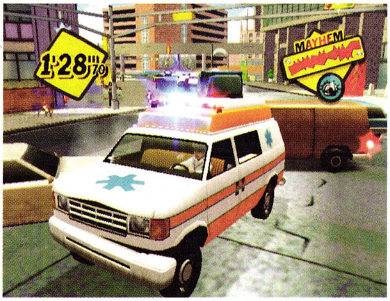
Mmm...pies. If the puzzles don't make you smarter, they're sure to make you hungrier.

In Harm's Way

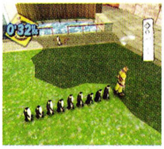
>EMERGENCY MAYHEM

PLATFORM: **Wii** • PUBLISHER: **CODEMASTERS**
DEVELOPER: **SUPERSONIC** • RELEASE: **SPRING 2008**

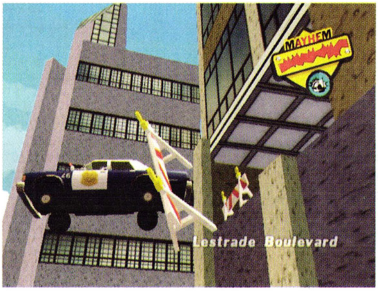
With its free-roaming city, arcade-style shenanigans, and giant arrow at the top of the screen pointing you to the nearest objective, Emergency Mayhem takes obvious inspiration from Sega's Crazy Taxi. Instead of picking up fares and whisking them to their destination as quickly as possible, though, you'll get behind the wheel of three emergency-response vehicles in this Wii-exclusive driving game. Weaving through traffic in a fire truck, police cruiser, or ambulance, your goal is to respond to as many crises as possible in the time allotted. Upon arriving on the scene, you'll occasionally be tasked with completing one of 60 microgames. These range from defusing a bomb by using the Wii remote as a wire cutter to resuscitating a patient by pumping the controller like a defibrillator. Though it's certainly a promising concept, our time with an early version of the game left us with some concerns. The motion controls need some work, and the overall experience just doesn't feel as frantic as it should. Hopefully the developers can rescue Emergency Mayhem from these issues prior to its spring release. —**STEVE T.**


1'28"70
MAYHEM

0'15"
Put out the fire!



Granted, we haven't attended police academy or EMT classes, but we doubt that driving off a cliff is an effective means of responding to an emergency.


MAYHEM
Lestrade Boulevard

Path of Destruction

>RONDO OF SWORDS

PLATFORM: **DS** • PUBLISHER: **ATLUS**
DEVELOPER: **SUCCESS** • RELEASE: **APRIL 2008**

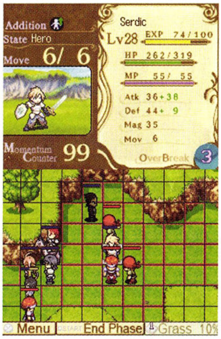
Featuring cute anime graphics, a high-fantasy motif, and a conventional roster of fighters, archers, and cavaliers, Rondo of Swords doesn't look like the sort of game to break new ground in the turn-based strategy genre. But looks can be deceiving—with a handful of tactical twists, Rondo of Swords has broken away from the Fire Emblem mold and created a new strategy-RPG formula that is as fresh and intuitive as it is strategically deep.

The biggest surprise is the omission of the basic Attack command. Instead, you use the stylus to draw a movement path for each of your fighters, who automatically strike at any foe they encounter along the way. Healing and stat-boosting skills work the same way, triggering whenever a character moves past an ally capable of using them. If you lure your enemies close and position your allies well, you can set up devastating turns in which a single hero dashes past an ally to earn an attack boost, slices through several foes, and stops just past a healer for a free dose of HP recovery. Of course, this sword cuts both ways—sloppy positioning can leave you set up for a brutal rout, as a single highly mobile enemy can potentially strike every character in your party.

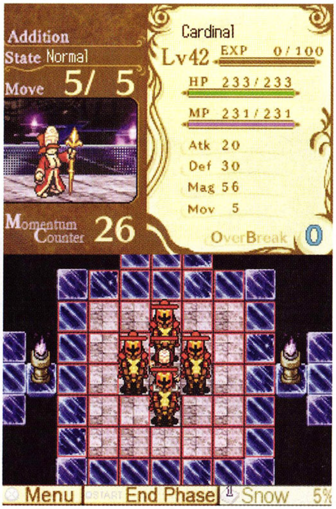
Another innovation is a clever system that solves one of the Catch-22s of strategy games. It's no fun to battle against bad AI, but smart foes tend to single out and kill your mages and healers immediately—and that's not much fun either. But in Rondo of Swords, each character has "momentum" based on his performance in battle. A warrior who launches multiple attacks will see his momentum grow, boosting the rate at which he charges special attacks, but also attracting the attention of enemy units. So when a mage is trapped on the front lines, he can keep a low profile while your fighters put on a show to draw enemy fire. If you manage your momentum cleverly, your seemingly harmless mage will be ignored until the moment that he incinerates an enemy battalion with his Ignite Lore spell. Bwahahaha!

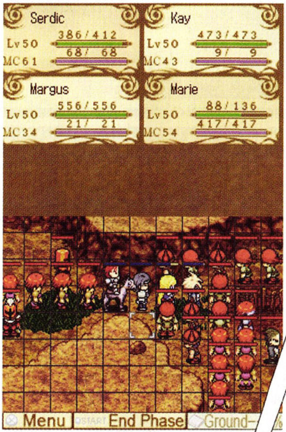
Rondo of Swords has plenty of other good ideas, including the ability to send characters on side quests, shopping trips, and training regimens when you can't make room for them on your battle roster. There's clearly a ton of depth here, and you'll need every last bit of it—the enemy army in Rondo of Swords was consistently kicking my butt by the fifth map. At this point it's too early to tell if Rondo is simply a beast of a game, or if I'm still reeling from the fact that traditional strategy-RPG tactics are next to useless on this strange new battlefield. Either way, Rondo of Swords has my brain churning in ways few recent strategy games can match. —CASEY L.

PREVIEW
APRIL '08

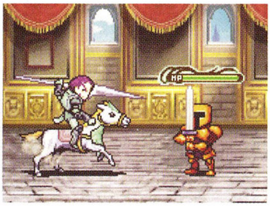

Addition
State Hero
Move 6/ 6
Serdic
Lv28 EXP 74/100
HP 262/319
MP 55/ 55
Atk 36+38
Def 44+ 9
Mag 35
Mov 6
Momentum Counter 99
OverBreak 3
Menu
End Phase
Grass 10%

Cartman was right. The ginger kids must die!


Addition
State Normal
Move 5/ 5
Cardinal
Lv42 EXP 0/100
HP 233/233
MP 231/231
Atk 20
Def 30
Mag 56
Mov 5
Momentum Counter 26
OverBreak 0
Menu
End Phase
Snow 5%


Serdic
Lv50 386/412
MC61 68/ 68
Kay
Lv50 473/473
MC43 9/ 9
Margus
Lv50 556/556
MC34 21/ 21
Marie
Lv50 88/136
MC54 417/417
Menu
End Phase
Ground-

After you draw your combat route, your hero will slaughter her foes with a smile on her face. War can be so adorable.

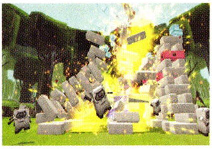


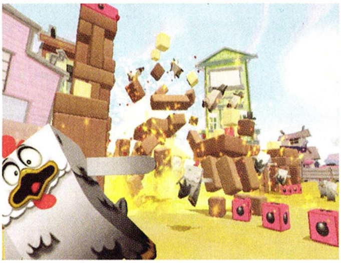
New Kid on the Blox

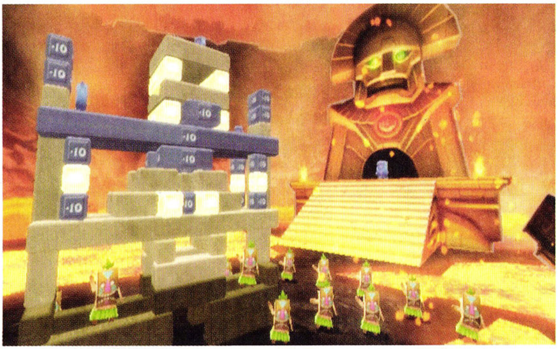
>BOOM BLOX

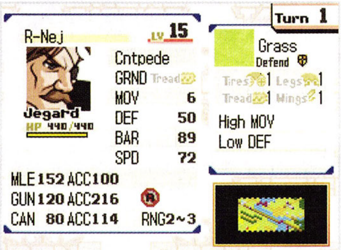
PLATFORM: **Wii** • PUBLISHER: **ELECTRONIC ARTS**
DEVELOPER: **EA LOS ANGELES** • RELEASE: **MAY 2008**

Steven Spielberg isn't completely new to the video game world. Many of his movies have been adapted to games, and he provided the inspiration for EA's Medal of Honor series. But this spring, he'll be stepping up as full-blown game creator with the exclusive-to-Wii Boom Blox. Think of it as a destructive version of Jenga with lots of Hollywood-style explosions. Featuring a realistic physics model, Boom Blox has you figuring out a block-built structure's weak points in order to knock it down by hitting it with projectiles. You grab objects and throw them at blocks by way of Wii remote-triggered motion control. Like the bulk of Spielberg's film catalog, the game is family-friendly, with four types of environments, more than 300 puzzles, and a menagerie of 30 characters. And Spielberg isn't the only creator in the Boom Blox world. You'll have the opportunity to make your own puzzles and share them with other Boom Blox players via WiiConnect24. With the new Indiana Jones movie also set for a May release, it looks like the early summer will be saturated by Spielberg. —GEORGE S.



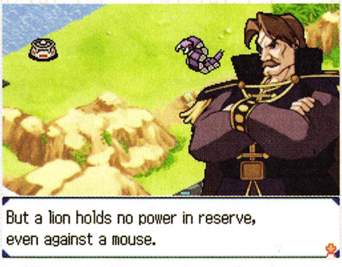






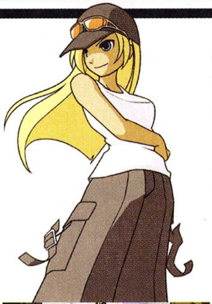
R-Nej
LV 15
Cntpede
GRND Tread
MOV 6
DEF 50
BAR 89
SPD 72
Jegard
HP 440/440
MLE 152 ACC100
GUN 120 ACC216
CAN 80 ACC114 RNG2~3

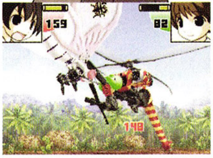
Turn 1
Grass
Defend
Tires 1 Legs 1
Tread 1 Wings 1
High MOV
Low DEF

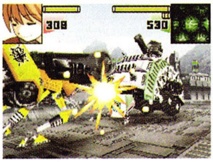


But a lion holds no power in reserve,
even against a mouse.

You'd be surprised how many humans have been transported to the robotic bug-battling world of Cimexus. All the humans play an integral part in the conflict, most with their own specialized insect-inspired mechs.







Axis of Weevil

>DRONE TACTICS

PLATFORM: **DS** • PUBLISHER: **ATLUS**
DEVELOPER: **SUCCESS** • RELEASE: **APRIL 2008**

With their home world under assault from giant robotic bugs, the sentient insects of Cimexus have done the only logical thing: teleport to Earth and recruit a pair of middle-schoolers to command another robot-bug army against them. That may not make a lot of sense, but it gives developer Success an excuse to combine every preteen's love of bugs, guns, trading cards, and...uh...military tactics? Drone Tactics is indeed a strategy title in the vein of Advance Wars, featuring a variety of customizable insects that are reminiscent of the mechs in Square Enix's Front Mission series. The basic mechanics of positioning units and engaging foes are fairly conventional, but Drone Tactics adds a twist by allowing players to build a deck of cards with special abilities that can heal their troops, unlock special attacks, or damage enemy units directly. Despite the kid appeal of its concept, there seems to be enough depth and challenge here to keep even veteran tacticians engaged. —CASEY L.

River King™
Mystic Valley

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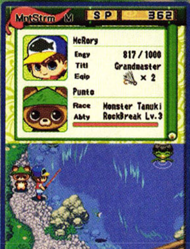
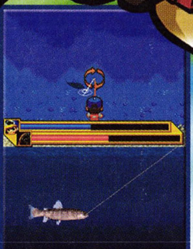
MARCH 2008!


MntStrm M
SP 362
McRory
Engy 817 / 1000
Titl Grandmaster
Eqip × 2
Punto
Race Monster Tanuki
Abty RockBreak Lv.3

Yeah.
It's all thanks to
this guy.



There's a lot of yellow
butterflies around here.

Innovative Touch Screen Controls!

Multiplayer fishing tournaments via Wi-Fi!

EVERYONE
E
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The Iron Man Cometh

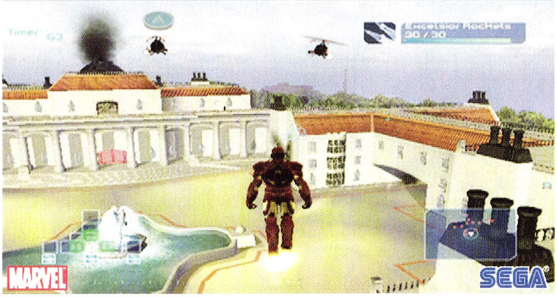
> IRON MAN

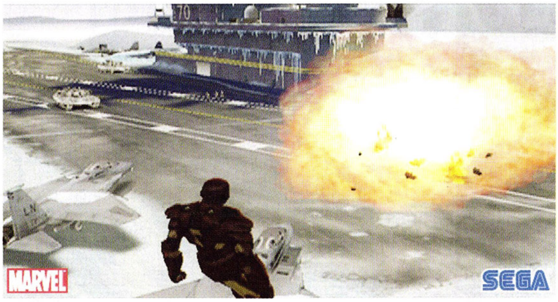
PLATFORM: **Wii, DS** • PUBLISHER: **SEGA**
DEVELOPER: **A2M** • RELEASE: **MAY 2008**

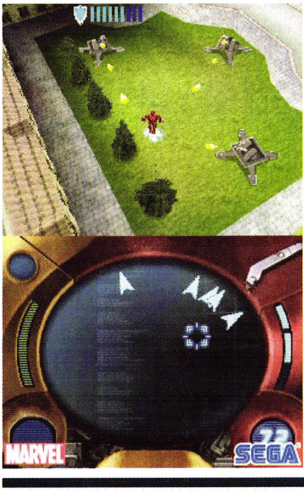
With Marvel's Iron Man set to storm the box office in May, Sega is putting the finishing touches on the obligatory video game adaptations. Players will be able to follow the exploits of entrepreneur-turned-alcoholic-turned-superhero Tony Stark on both Wii and DS, and developer A2M is tailoring each title to its respective platform. (In other words, both games are completely different from the Xbox 360 and PlayStation 3 versions, which are being crafted by a different studio.)

The Wii game kicks off with a suitably adrenaline-pumping introduction; players use the old-school Mark I suit (complete with flamethrower) to escape a terrorist facility while the bludgeoning beat of Black Sabbath's "Iron Man" blares in the background. From there, you'll slip into the more recognizable red-and-gold, but your objectives remain pretty much the same throughout: blow up the bad guys. What separates Iron Man from similar fare, of course, is that you can take flight and dish out ordnance from above. You'll use the Wii remote to aim your weapons, and the C and Z Buttons to adjust your altitude while hovering in place. Flicking the nunchuk will perform an evasive dash, and a number of contextual prompts will require certain motions to rip the turret off of a tank, for instance, or grab a helicopter and smash it in midair. You've also got to manage your suit's energy during battle, diverting extra juice to your weapons, shields, or propulsion as the situation demands. Regarding the game's narrative, Sega claims that it will expand on the film, and feature some familiar faces from the comic book that don't appear in the movie. Many of the flick's stars, including Robert Downey Jr., will lend their vocal talents to the game's cut-scenes.

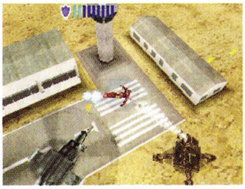
The DS game is also singularly concerned with blowing stuff up. The gameplay unfolds on the top screen, and as you move with the Control Pad, you'll drag the stylus over the touch screen to fire your weapon independently in the desired direction (sort of like Geometry Wars). For every enemy unit or structure you destroy, you'll earn research points that you can use to upgrade your suit and arsenal in various categories (strengthening your shields, boosting your repulsor beam, etc.). Moreso than its Wii counterpart, the portable version is separated into on-foot and flying stages, with the latter feeling a bit like EA's classic Desert Strike series. Shockingly, the game is compatible with the DS Rumble Pack, giving the shootouts a bit more oomph. If you'd like to try the DS game for yourself, keep an eye on your local DS Download Station; Sega will distribute a playable demo prior to the title's release. —STEVE T.



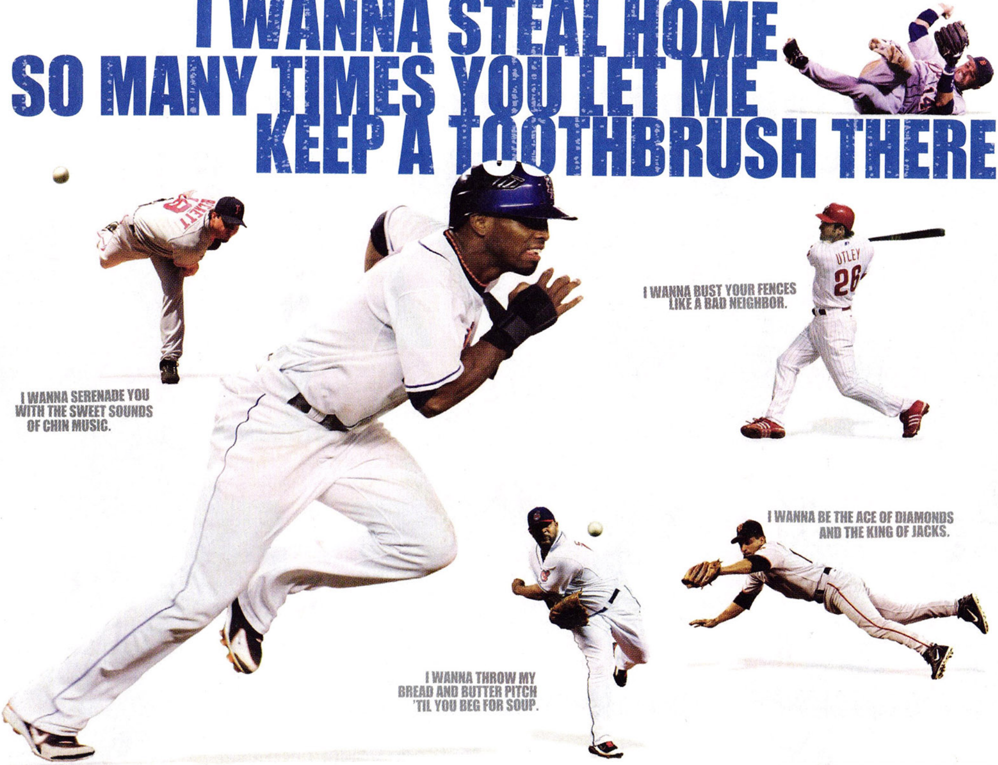




Iron Man, Iron Man; does whatever an iron can. Gets the wrinkles out of clothes; his helmet doesn't have a nose. Look out; here comes the Iron Man!



I WANNA STEAL HOME SO MANY TIMES YOU LET ME KEEP A TOOTHBRUSH THERE.



I WANNA MAKE BIG PLAYS.
AND REPLAYS. AND REPLAYS.

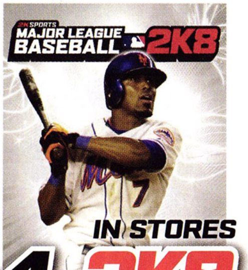
I WANNA SERENADE YOU
WITH THE SWEET SOUNDS
OF CHIN MUSIC.

I WANNA BUST YOUR FENCES
LIKE A BAD NEIGHBOR.

I WANNA BE THE ACE OF DIAMONDS
AND THE KING OF JACKS.

I WANNA THROW MY
BREAD AND BUTTER PITCH
'TIL YOU BEG FOR SOUP.

Steal like a crooked corporate fatcat with intuitive All-New Baserunning. Bring enough heat to cause 3rd degree burns – or use a breaking hook to bait them – with Total Pitch Control, where your right stick determines the pitch, its speed and accuracy. And with 2K Cards, you can unlock, collect, trade, and show off what you've earned to the entire 2K community. **IF YOU WANNA, YOU GOTTA GET *MAJOR LEAGUE BASEBALL®* 2K8.**



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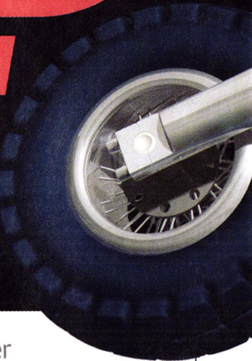
We finally get behind the wheel of **MARIO KART Wii**, the revolutionary new take on Nintendo's beloved series.

ROAD TEST



Nintendo Power had never faced a threat as big as the work-stopping power of Super Smash Bros. Brawl...and then Mario Kart Wii showed up on our doorstep. While putting countless hours into four-player races, Battle-mode bouts, and Grand Prix cup competitions, it's a wonder that we still found the time to finish this issue.

BY CHRIS SLATE

Our long days and late nights spent karting weren't just for fun, however, as we closely studied every new feature that die-hard Mario Kart fans have been dying to know about. We've beaten every track, raced as every character, tested every vehicle, and spent weeks with the new Wii Wheel—and we're about to tell you *everything*.

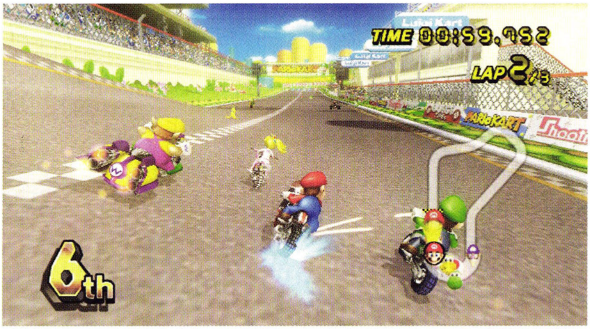
The Series' Biggest Leap Forward

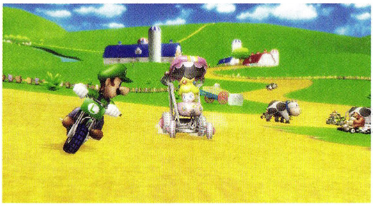
The 2008 model of Mario Kart sports a sleek new look and comes fully loaded with more new features than ever before. Every aspect of the Wii hardware is being put to good use: the series looks better than ever with extra track detail, better character anima-

tions, and nice new lighting effects; the Wii Wheel adds wireless motion control; and there are many great uses for Nintendo Wi-Fi Connection. Even the game's restyled clean, white menus seem infused with Wii-ness.

In place of the two-character race teams that were used in the last console Mario Kart—GameCube's Double Dash!!—MK Wii has added the option to use bikes as well as karts. Races now include a whopping 12 competitors, which makes the action more frenzied than ever, especially in the super-competitive 150cc class (a dozen characters throwing around

NOTE: Many of the screens shown in this feature are from a Japanese build of the game.





The new bikes take sharper turns than karts and feature the ability to gain speed by popping wheelies on straightaways.

items can be pure madness). And for the first time racers can perform midair tricks that reward the player with an instant Mini-Turbo upon landing.

Nearly all of the series' classic items have returned in an arsenal that most closely resembles that of the most recent installment, Mario Kart DS (for example, the DS's Bullet Bill item is used in place of the similar Chain Chomp from Double Dash!!). In addition, three all-new items have been added: the Mega Mushroom from New Super Mario Bros. (driving over people as a giant is oh so satisfying); the classic Mario Bros. POW Block (after a brief warning, every other car is jolted to a complete stop); and the Lightning Cloud, which will speed you up for a short time before shrinking you (you can pass on the impending curse by bumping into someone else).

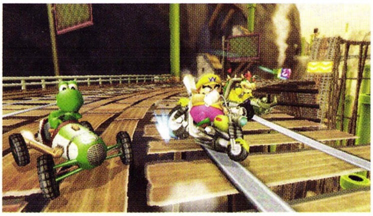
While the game still feels unmistakably like Mario Kart, these changes and more add up to the freshest shell-slinging action we've seen since the original SNES title debuted more than 15 years ago. Longtime fans need not be nervous; trust us—Mario Kart Wii is a blast.

Hands on the Wheel

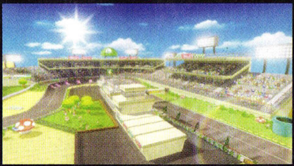
Mario Kart Wii's defining feature is its use of Nintendo's new Wii Wheel. The peripheral is so important to the game, in fact, that they come packaged together. The developers designed the game with it in mind, although the title also supports the Classic and GameCube controllers and the remote+nunchuk. After we played a lot of Double Dash!! and Mario Kart DS in anticipation of MK Wii, switching to the wheel took some adjusting—it wasn't really harder to use, just different. At first it's natural to oversteer, but turns can be made with relatively small movements—on a clock face, the full turning range of the wheel would be from about 10:00 to 2:00. You'll quickly form a connection with the onscreen racer and "feel" how much to turn while watching his or her movements. We quickly got up to speed and could soon steer, dodge, and drift as well as we ever could the old-fashioned way. The Wii Wheel adds the fun feel of a deluxe sit-down arcade cabinet without the immobile bulk of traditional console game wheels.

Of course, the device is simply a plastic shell

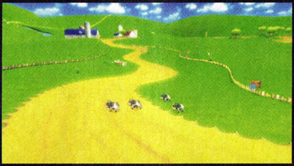
While the vehicles aren't quite as crazy and unique-looking as in Mario Kart DS, there's plenty enough variety to go around.



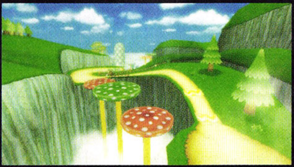
MUSHROOM CUP



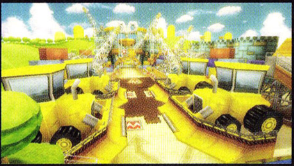
LUIGI CIRCUIT A great all-around starter track. Drifting through the boost pads banked around the final turn is a rush!



MOO MOO MEADOWS Lots of winding off-road drifting, complicated by groups of cows that slowly wander across the track.



MUSHROOM GORGE Bouncing and pulling tricks off the red mushrooms is crazy fun, but it's tricky to keep your car out of the chasms.

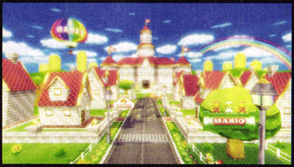


TOAD'S FACTORY Drive over conveyor belts, through mud, and across moving platforms in one of the trickiest new courses.

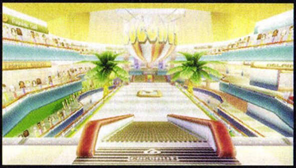
TOP TRACKS

Mario Kart Wii comes packed with one of the best course lineups in series history, which features amazing new tracks plus updated favorites from the past. Can't wait to try them out? Then check out the following hands-on details and impressions for the first half of the game's hefty collection of 32 racetracks.

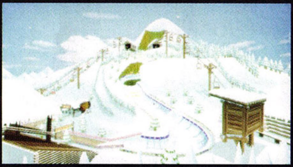
FLOWER CUP



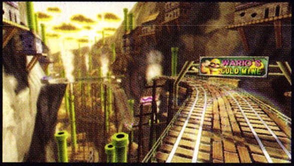
MARIO CIRCUIT A short track with a great straightaway for wheelies, a testy Chain Chomp, and a very long drift to the finish line.



COCONUT MALL Multiple paths, wide-open spaces, and moving escalators. Darting cars in the parking lot can lead to major road rage.

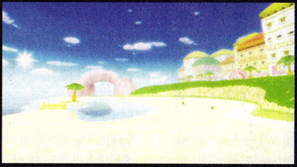


DK SUMMIT A challenging downhill course with a long series of halfpipe-style boost ramps for tricking over heavy snow banks.

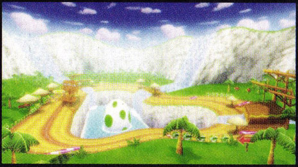


WARIO'S GOLD MINE A punishing roller coaster ride with few guardrails to keep you on course after plentiful boost opportunities.

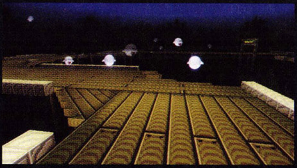
SHELL CUP



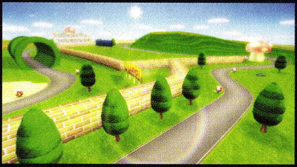
GCN PEACH BEACH No more pipe launch near the start, but a new boost ramp leads into the old shortcut after the first turn.



DS YOSHI FALLS The exact same as on the DS, only the second bridge is now a great spot to catch some air and trick for a Mini-Turbo.

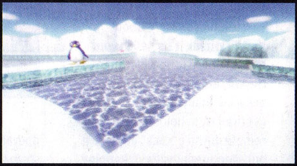


SNES GHOST VALLEY 2 Parts of the guard walls fall away as you bump them, making the track tougher as the race goes on.

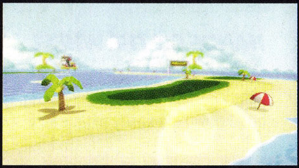


N64 MARIO RACEWAY A back-to-basics drifter's paradise with a single ramp perfectly placed for a shortcut across the grass.

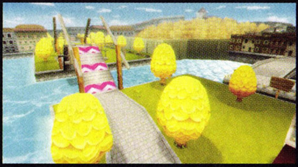
BANANA CUP



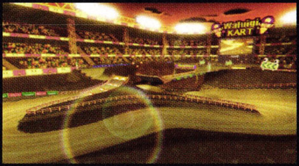
N64 SHERBET LAND This classic—made of a slippery surface, belly-sliding penguins, and sharp turns—is almost entirely unchanged.



GBA SHY GUY BEACH Tough off-road drifting, slowing patches of grass and water, and crossing crabs make for a difficult race.

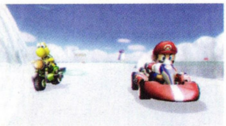


DS DELFINO SQUARE Drifting around the fountain quickly charges a stage 2 Mini-Turbo, and the drawbridge is great for big-air tricks.



GCN WALUIGI STADIUM The plentiful bumps and hills—plus new halfpipe boost pads—make this the best track for tricks.

The game's new trick system, drift mechanics, and bikes work equally well on new and retro courses alike (although the Wii tracks tend to fit in more ramps).



that the Wii remote fits snugly into, so if you wanted, you could play only using the remote. Turning the remote like a wheel works, as does tilting it like in Wii's first motion-controlled racing game, Excite Truck. But once you've taken hold of the wheel, the remote alone will be a poor alternative. Not only does it feel less like the real thing, but the way that you grip the wheel helps you from turning too far; simply holding the remote feels less accurate.

A few more details about the Wii Wheel: it's small in your hands—only a little wider than the Wii remote turned sideways—ensuring that your arms won't get tired from holding it up. The remote doesn't "click" into place, but silently squeezes in. Popping it out is easy—just push a finger or two through the large hole on the back of the wheel (during operation, the Wii remote's wrist strap goes through this hole). There is a small opening on the left side that allows you to still use the remote as a pointer while it's in the frame. The B Button—which is on the back of the wheel and presses the remote's B Button—is large, easy to reach, and has a nice, soft touch. It's vastly superior to tap-

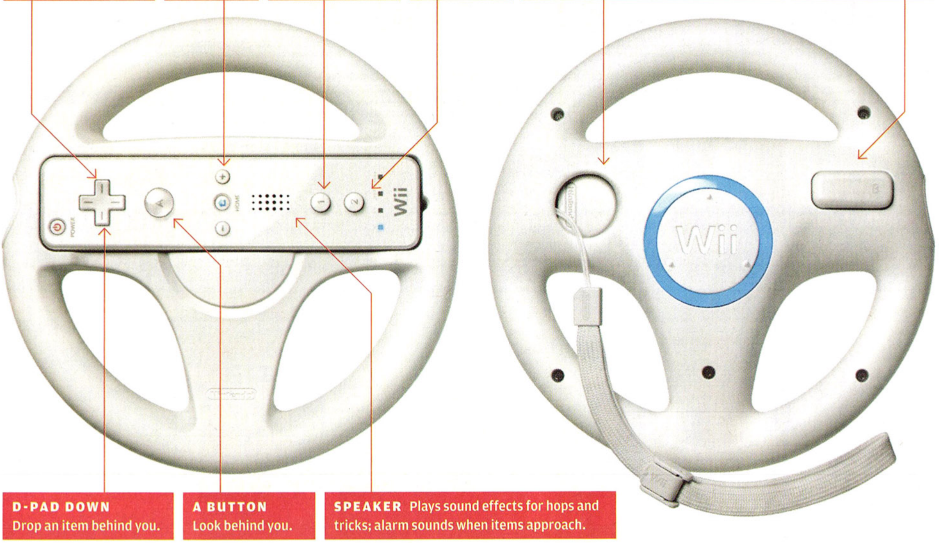
ROLL CALL

There are 12 standard characters, plus 6 hidden ones. We don't want to spoil any surprises, so we'll just list the starting roster:

- BABY MARIO
- BABY PEACH
- BOWSER
- DONKEY KONG
- KOOPA TROOPA
- LUIGI
- MARIO
- PEACH
- TOAD
- WALUIGI
- WARIO
- YOSHI
- +6 SECRET CHARACTERS
- +UNLOCKABLE Mii

HANDS ON THE WHEEL

We were just as eager to try out Nintendo's new Wii Wheel as we were to give the new Mario Kart a spin, and we weren't disappointed. Longtime fans might need a few races to adjust to the new control style, but before long it feels weirder to race without it. Here's a breakdown of exactly what every button does in Mario Kart Wii.



D-PAD UP Throw an item in front of you

+ BUTTON Pause

1 BUTTON Hop/Drift/Reverse

2 BUTTON Accelerate

STRAP HOLE Push the Wii remote through here to remove it from the wheel.

B BUTTON Hop/Drift/Reverse

D-PAD DOWN Drop an item behind you.

A BUTTON Look behind you.

SPEAKER Plays sound effects for hops and tricks; alarm sounds when items approach.

NINTENDO DS

Wii

DREAM PINBALL 3D

NINTENDO DS
DREAM PINBALL 3D
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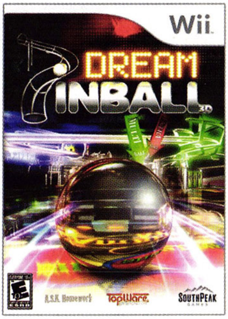
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ping the remote's trigger sans the wheel. Since B is the primary Hop/Drift button, that alone makes the wheel invaluable in Kart.

Not much else can be said about the Wii Wheel; it feels like a quality product, and we've had a blast playing with it here at the office. I've actually gotten so comfortable using it that when I went back and played Mario Kart DS, I instinctively tried to tilt my DS to steer. If you were at all worried about the new controls, don't be! (For an up-close look at the Wii Wheel, see the sidebar on pg. 36.)

Taking a Test Drive

In addition to the Wii Wheel, the game includes some other control changes that bear mentioning. One of the first things that everyone here at NP noticed is that, initially, it's much easier to begin drifting in the wrong direction. You have to take a moment to make sure that your kart is pointing into the slide before you press the button to hop into a drift. It takes very little time to get the hang of this change; it's only worth mentioning since we suspect everyone will encounter this when they first play the game.

In what seems to be an effort to broaden the series' appeal to Wii's huge contingent of new gamers, the game offers a new Automatic Drift option. As the name suggests, if this option is selected your kart will automatically go into a drift around sharp turns—no button press needed—making control a bit easier. However, autodrifting won't earn you any Mini-Turbos, and it turns off the ability to hop. For traditional button-induced, turbo-charging powerslides, Manual Drift is the way to go.

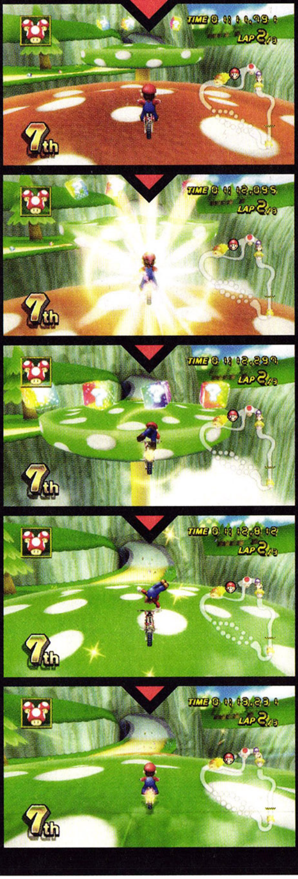
Speaking of drifting, Mini-Turbos charge a little differently than before. In past games, you could earn two stages of Mini-Turbo by repeatedly turning into and out of the drift. Now both stages are charged by simply continuing to hold a drift no matter which way you turn the wheel (although sharper turns will charge Mini-Turbos faster). You also can gain Mini-Turbos by hitting the accelerator the moment you're dropped on the road after taking a fall, and by performing tricks.

Finding the right spots on each

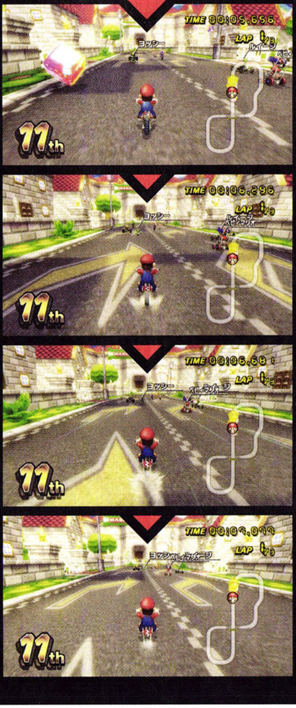
TRICKS FOR TURBOS

Thanks to the new trick system in Mario Kart Wii, adventurous players can score some bonus boosts to speed them along the track. While any small hill or bump can be tricked off of, the bigger ramps—that lead to higher altitude—are where the real action is. Let's take a look at some of these beautiful new moves in motion.

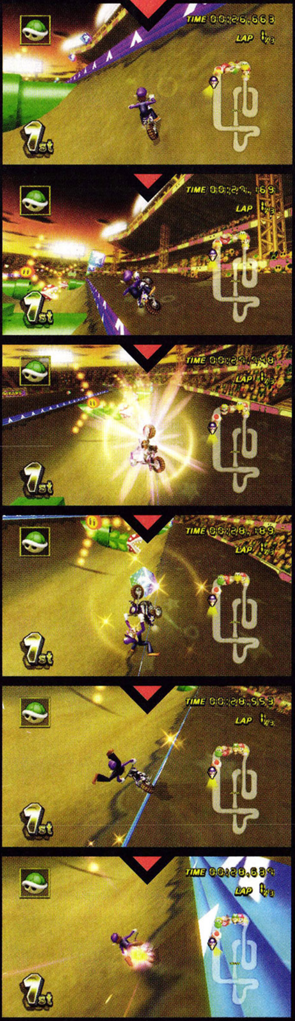
SMALL JUMP Pulling back on the wheel just as you pop off a low hill or bump—or in this case, a giant mushroom—nets an easy boost.



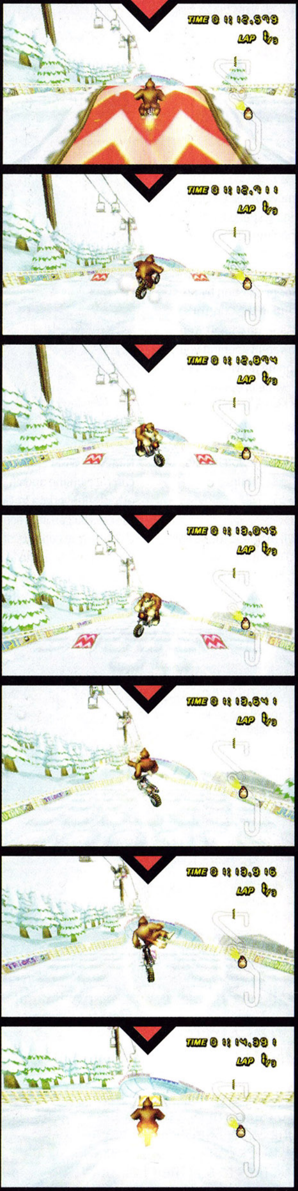
WHEELIE Bikes have the advantage on straightaways thanks to speedy wheelies.



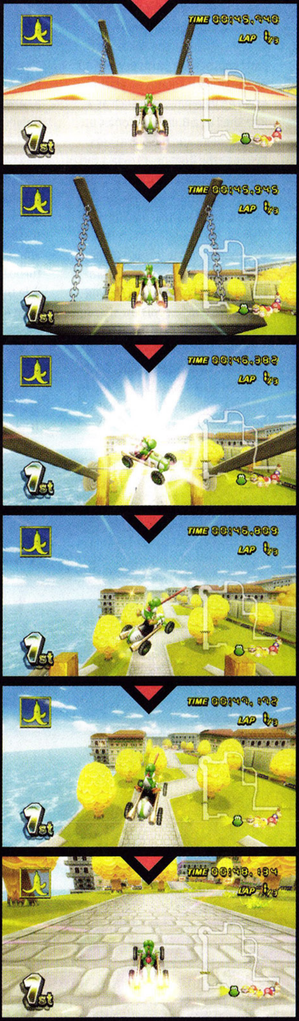
HALF PIPE JUMP It may seem out of the way to reach ramps like these, but they're well worth the big boost you get upon landing.



MEDIUM JUMP Average-sized ramps like this one provide plenty enough airtime to flash some style and finish off with a Mini-Turbo.

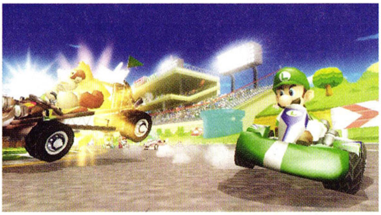


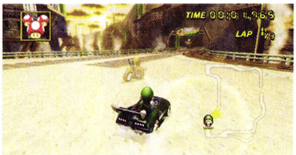
BIG JUMP Spots that give you this much hangtime are rare and incredibly thrilling.



track to pull tricks is crucial to getting the best lap times, as landing one instantly launches you with a Mini-Turbo. The game's courses (even the ones returning from past games) are littered with ramps, hills, and bumps for players to trick off of by simply jerking back on the wheel as they take to the air. This is a great new addition to the series, one that we really miss when we now play the earlier games.

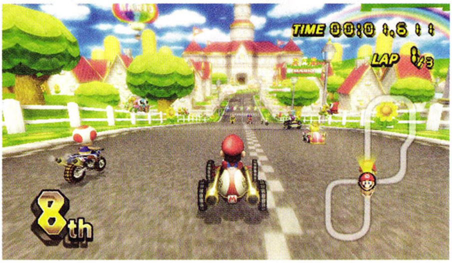
The speaker in the Wii remote adds another fun (and very useful) new feature. It sounds an alarm when an incoming item such as a Red Shell or a Bullet Bill comes up from behind, and the alarm gets faster as the item nears. Since the noise comes from your own controller, there's no confusion as to who the alarm is for while playing with friends. The sound is accompanied by a marker at the bottom of the screen that shows what the item is and which direction it's coming from. This adds a cool new strategic element as you try to avoid the approaching hazard while still sticking to a fast racing line. (You can also take a peek behind you by pressing the A Button, but that's often too risky to try.)





Whether taking on 12 competitors or a single ghost, Mario Kart Wii is a blast to play.

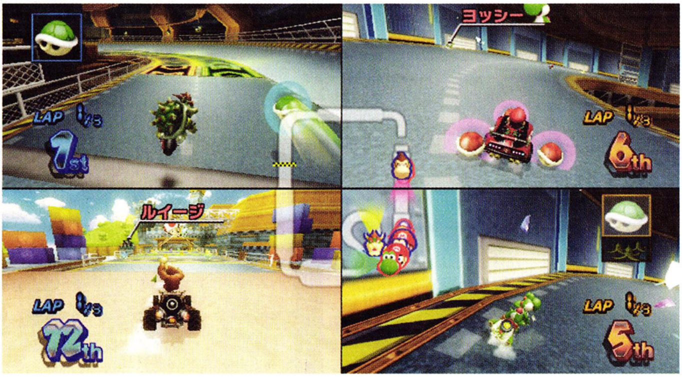
A couple more notes on control: drafting (gaining speed by driving closely behind another racer) is back from Mario Kart DS, and as always, you can hold an item behind you for protection by pressing left or right on the Control Pad (when using the wheel). You can also throw items behind you by simply tapping down on the Control Pad, while pressing up tosses items forward. And, in case you're wondering, the timing for a turbo start is exactly the same as it is in the DS version—you hit the gas right after the "2" count.

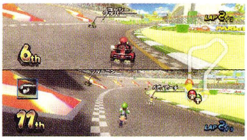


Game Modes

Mario Kart Wii includes the series' usual modes: Grand Prix (1 or 2 players), Battle (1-4 players), Time Trials, and Vs. (2-4 players). Using Nintendo Wi-Fi Connection, players can race online and challenge each other's ghost data in Time Trials to see who can set record times. Battle mode consists of the classic Balloon Battle game (in which you chase down your opponents and pop their balloons with items) and Coin Runners (where the team that collects the most coins wins). Both games are played with two six-man teams, with the CPU filling in for non-player characters (a nice touch: dropped items won't affect fellow team members). The DS's Mission mode doesn't return.

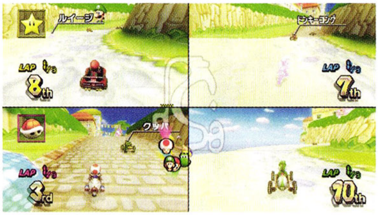
There is a twist to the game's usual three speed classes: only karts are allowed to race in 50cc and only bikes can compete in 100cc, with 150cc allowing them

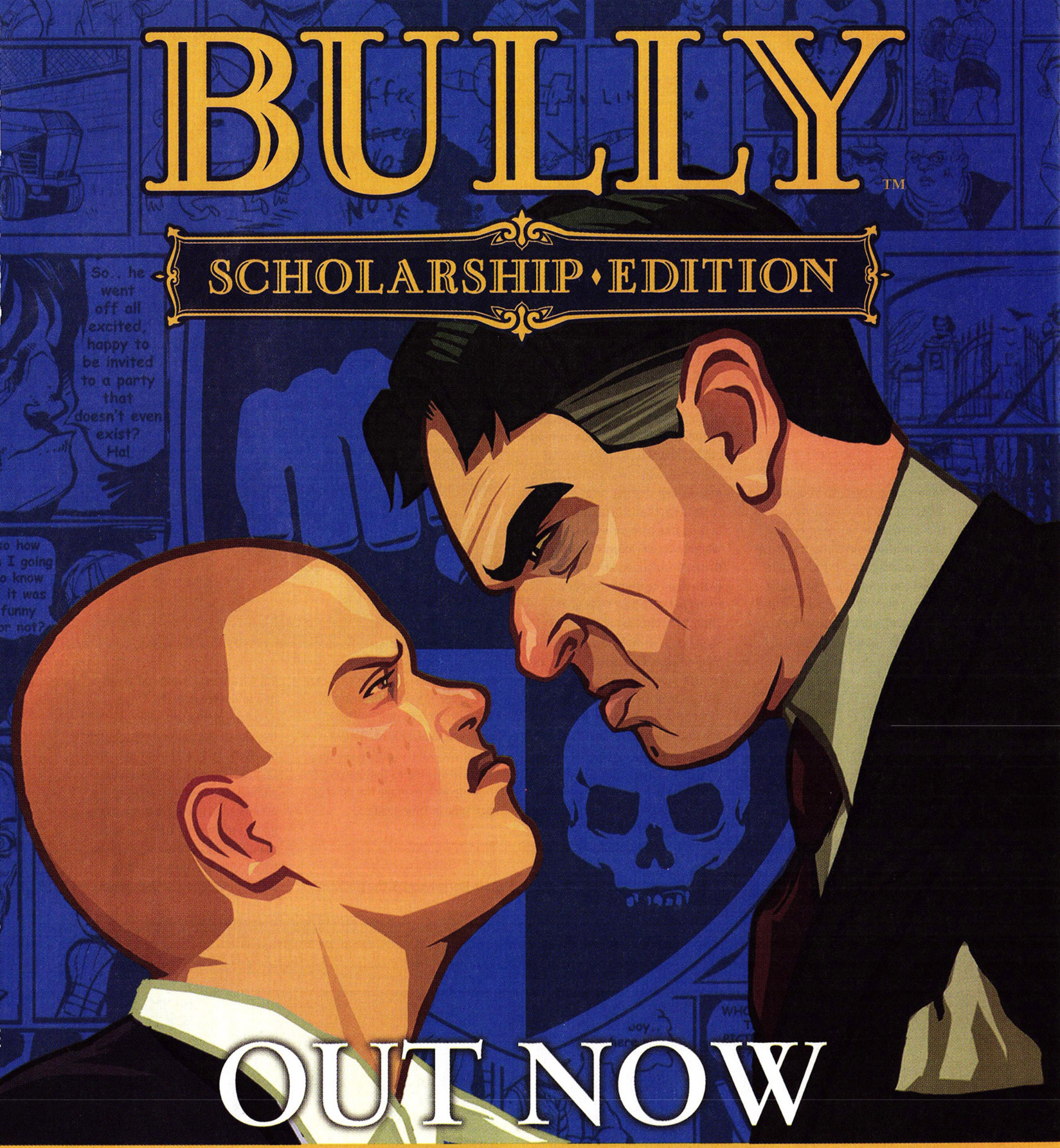




MULTIPLAYER MAYHEM

As much fun as it is to work your way through the cups in Grand Prix mode, multiplayer is the heart and soul of the Mario Kart series. Two- and four-player solo and team races are as wild and crazy as ever with bananas littering the tracks, Red Shells zipping around corners, and Bloopers inking up windshields. The first-place-seeking Spiny Shell is as unavoidably devastating as always, and the new POW Block comes in a close second on the list of items most likely to cause victims to pull their hair out. For core and casual players alike, Mario Kart Wii is a party essential.

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Crude Humor
Language
Sexual Themes
Use of Alcohol and Tobacco
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XBOX 360®

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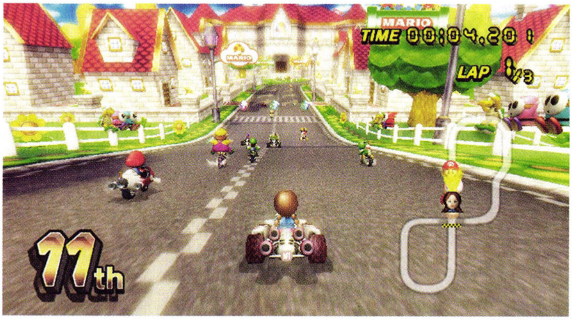


RACE AS A Mii

The only thing cooler than racing as Mario and company is drifting around corners as your very own Mii. While this option isn't available from the start, it won't take long to unlock for Kart vets who take aim at Grand Prix mode. Who would choose anyone other than themselves to represent record-setting Time Trial runs as ghost data? And multiplayer matches are especially fun when you can look back to see your banana hit a friend square in the face—*his* face.

both (at least, these are the only options when you start).

Karts vs. Bikes

While riding a bike isn't hugely different from driving a kart, there are some key distinctions, especially when it comes to charging and using Mini-Turbos. While a kart can power up a two-stage turbo, a bike can reach only stage 1. However, at any time a bike can perform a wheelie (done by flicking back the Wii Wheel) to gain speed (this seriously limits turning ability, however, so it's practical only on straightaways). Also, bikes make much sharper turns.

Both karts and bikes are rated in the same categories: Speed, Weight, Acceleration, Handling, Drift, Off-Road, and Mini-Turbo (note that the Items category found in Mario Kart DS is gone). There are four kart and four bike selections per weight class (Small, Medium, and Large) for an overall total of 12 karts and 12 bikes; one kart and one bike in each class must be unlocked. Also, there are 18 characters, including six hidden ones. All extra vehicles and characters (plus staff ghosts) are prizes for winning Grand Prix cups. You can even unlock the option to race as your very own Mii!

We've really enjoyed racing with bikes, although most of us still tend to favor the more powerful drifts that karts offer. It's great to have the choice, and races that mix both types are especially exciting. It will be very interesting to see the different strategies that players come up with to make the most of each type in Time Trials.

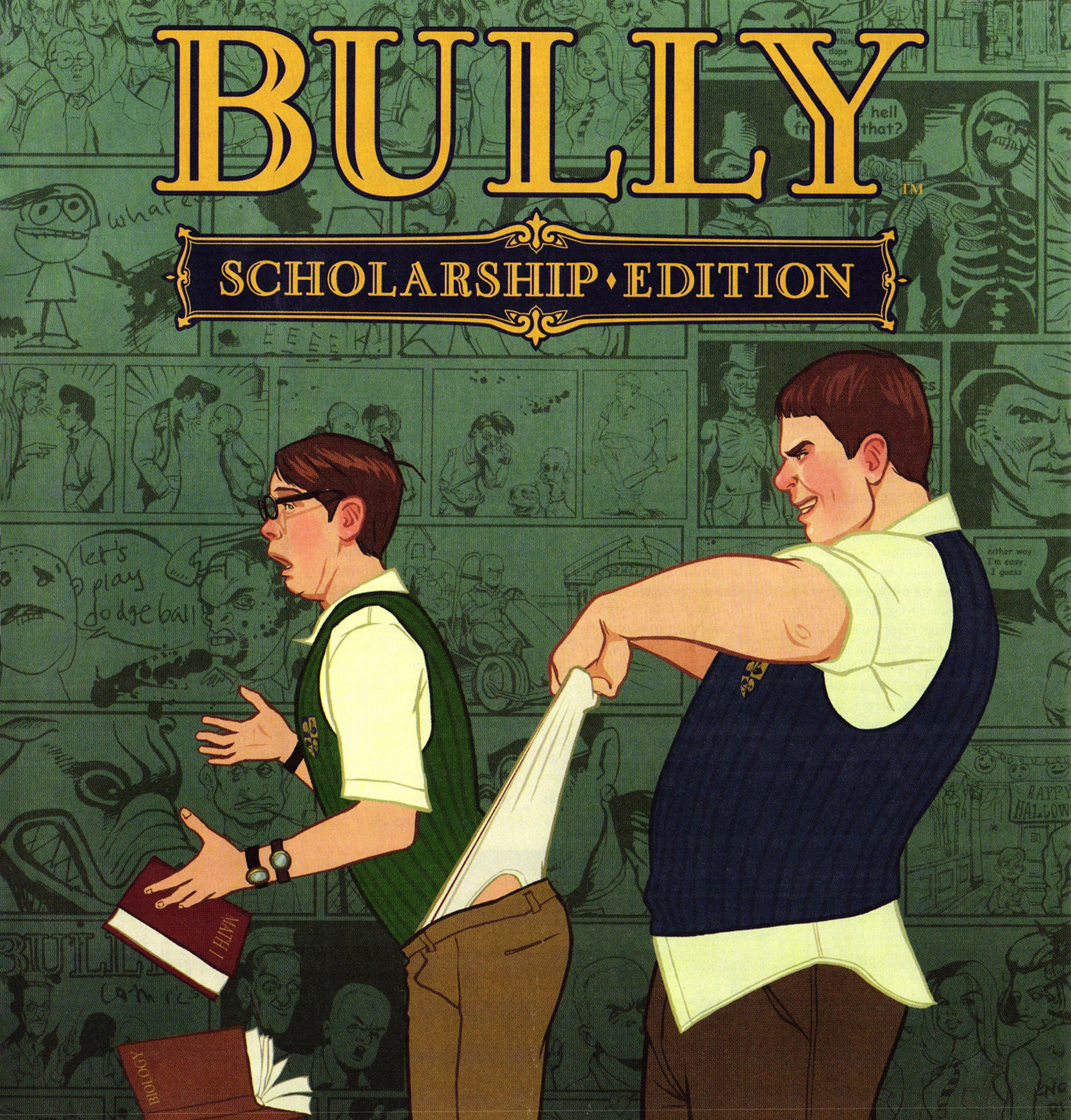
The Tracks: Both New and Old

As in Mario Kart DS, the tracks in MK Wii are split evenly between new and retro courses. There are 32 tracks in total, plus five new and five classic Battle-mode stages (all of which are available for both the Balloon Battle and Coin Runners games). The new race courses are optimized to make great use of the game's many new features, with plenty of places to jump, perform tricks, pop wheelies, and drift. While many longstanding series

FULL ITEMS LIST

The Mario Kart series has introduced a long list of crazy items over the years, and the new Wii edition uses most of them. For all of the true Kart fanatics out there, we've put together this complete list of what to expect.

- GREEN SHELL
- TRIPLE GREEN SHELLS
- RED SHELL
- TRIPLE RED SHELLS
- SPINY SHELL
- MUSHROOM
- TRIPLE MUSHROOMS
- GOLDEN MUSHROOM
- NEW! MEGA MUSHROOM
- LIGHTNING
- LIGHTNING CLOUD NEW!
- BANANA
- TRIPLE BANANAS
- BLOOPER
- BOB-OMB
- POW BLOCK NEW!
- STAR
- FAKE ITEM BOX
- BOO
- BULLET BILL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what the hell ... that?
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TEEN
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Crude Humor
Language
Sexual Themes
Use of Alcohol and Tobacco
Violence

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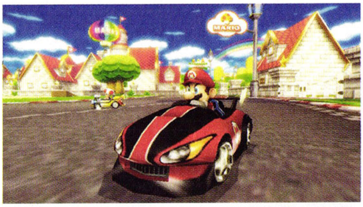


track themes return in shiny new incarnations (Mario Circuit, Luigi Circuit, DK Summit, etc.), there are brand-new concepts, as well. On one course you race through a shopping mall; another has you bouncing along the tops of giant mushrooms; and another finds you catching air down a snowy half-pipe. The retro tracks include a few selections that were also in the DS game, plus many other old favorites that we haven't seen in quite a while.

Visually, the courses include dramatic new lighting effects, more moving parts, and a decent amount of extra detail (watch for cheering Miis in the stands!). This is a very nice-looking Wii game, especially in 480p widescreen.

The retro stages come with small changes and graphical touch-ups, such as better lighting and added trick ramps. For example, in the Peach Beach course from Double Dash!!, the pipe launch to the left of the first turn is no longer there, but an added ramp offers a new shortcut shortly after the turn. Additionally, many elements that have always been in the retro levels can now be used in new ways. You can trick off of small hills on a bumpy road to earn Mini-Turbos, for instance, and straightaways can be used for wheelies. So, even if you've played the original versions of the stages hundreds of times, you'll need all-new strategies to master them again.

The combination of character and vehicle types lets you race just how you like.

What a Game!

From Zelda to Metroid to Mario to Smash and now Mario Kart, the Wii will soon be home to remarkable new editions of every top Nintendo franchise. No past console has hosted every triple-A Nintendo series nearly this fast—in fact, few systems have enjoyed a collection like this in their entire lifespans. What's amazing is that while every one of these titles delivers the exact types of experiences that fans expected and wanted, they also add dramatic twists to the old formulas. Like the other games, Mario Kart Wii is Nintendo at its best, giving fans what they want while surprising them with great new features they didn't know they were missing. The Wii Wheel, bikes, tricks, and other new additions put the spark back into an aged—but still fantastic—series. If our next issue arrives a little late, you'll know which game to blame.

BATTLE MODE STAGES

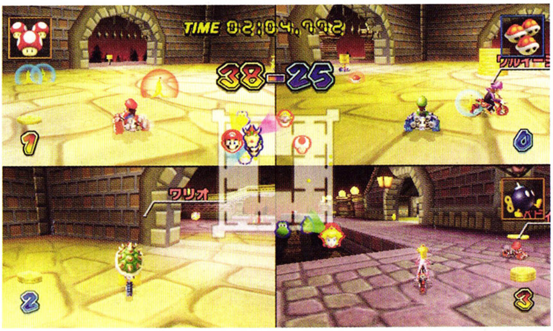
Here are the 10 levels that are available exclusively in the two Battle Mode games, Balloon Battle and Coin Runners.

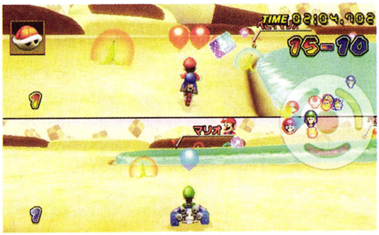
NEW STAGES

- BLOCK PLAZA
- DELFINO PIER
- FUNKY STADIUM
- CHAIN CHOMP WHEEL
- THWOMP DESERT

RETRO STAGES

- SNES BATTLE COURSE 4
- GBA BATTLE COURSE 3
- N64 SKYSCRAPER
- GCN COOKIE LAND
- DS TWILIGHT HOUSE





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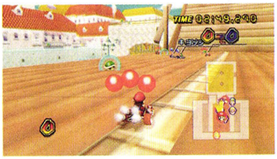
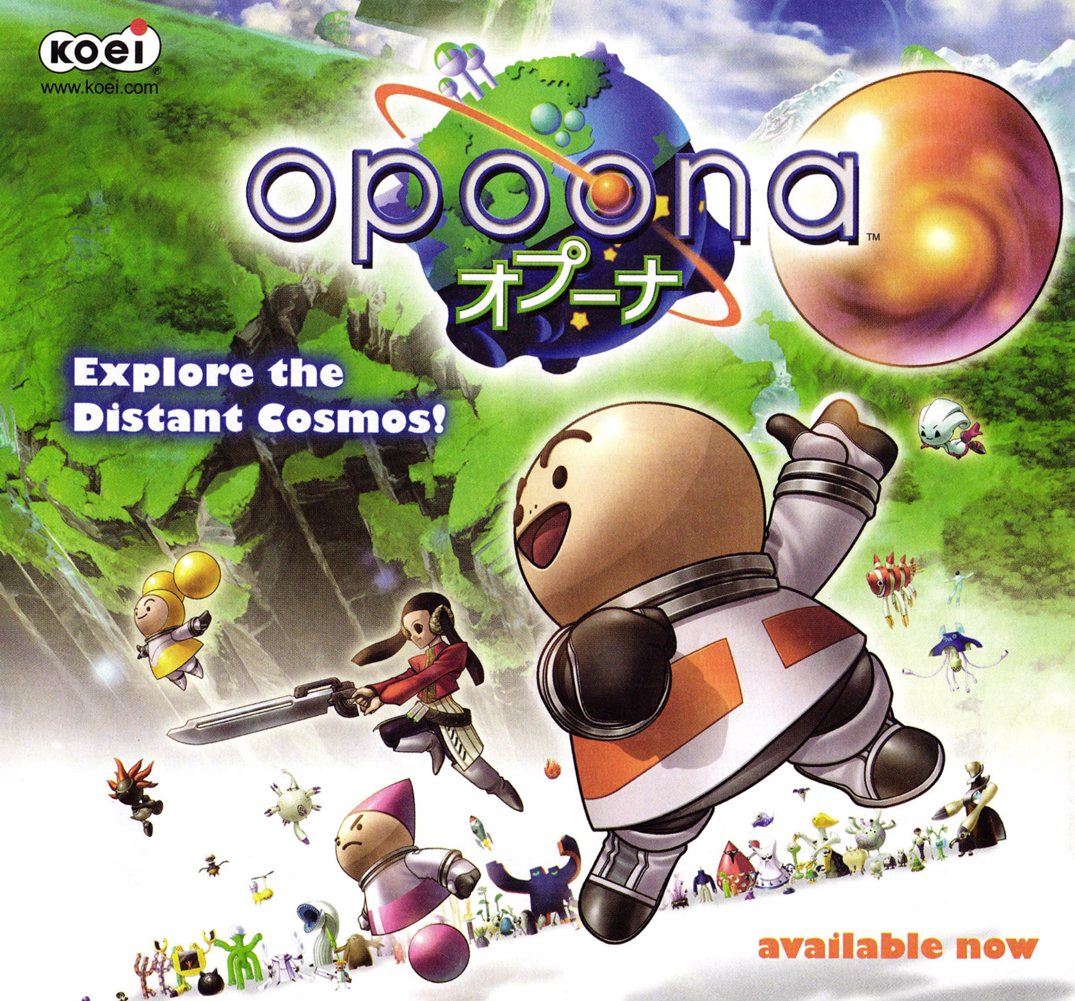


BATTLE MODE

There are two Battle Mode games this time: Balloon Battle and Coin Runners. Losing three balloons doesn't knock you out of competition like before; you can reappear and fight until time runs out. Coin Runners is won by the team that simply collects the tallest stack of coins.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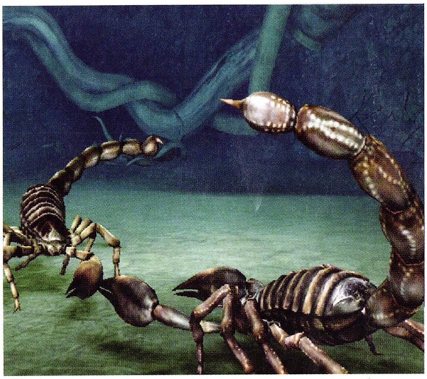
FEEL THE STING



A scorpion and a tarantula are unlikely protagonists in Deadly Creatures, the creepy, crawly, very original Wii-exclusive adventure from THQ.

BY CHRIS HOFFMAN

A scorpion sting, to say the least, is unpleasant. In a best-case scenario, a sting causes pain, swelling, and a burning sensation. In severe cases, the sting of some species can result in numbness, blurred vision, breathing difficulties, seizures, and even death. Obviously, a scorpion isn't something you want in your house—except in the case of THQ's Deadly Creatures, in which the scorpion's pain-inflicting talents will be yours to control, along with those of a tarantula.

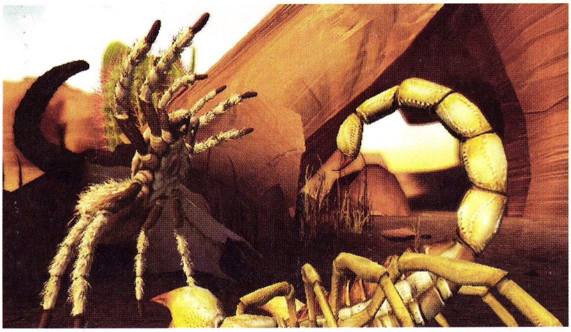
Deadly Creatures, however, isn't some Discovery Channel special—it's a full-blown adventure, complete with large, interconnected areas, acquired skills for navigating the environments, upgradeable fighting abilities, and a complex, gradually unfolding storyline.

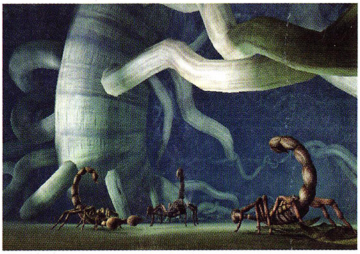
"Gameplay-wise, we wanted to have a really nice blend of exploration, combat...and the idea that you're a stranger in a strange land," says Jordan Itkowitz, lead designer at developer Rainbow Studios. "These creatures are pretty territorial, and in real life, they really don't travel very far from their burrows, but we're sending them out on this grand odyssey. Every new area that you get into is really diverse, very different, scary, and then teeming with creatures. You don't know what's going to come out from around every corner, or from over a wall, or from out of a hole."

For the team at Rainbow, Deadly Creatures offers a chance for them to take a break from the acclaimed racing games the studio is known for and try their hand at something new.

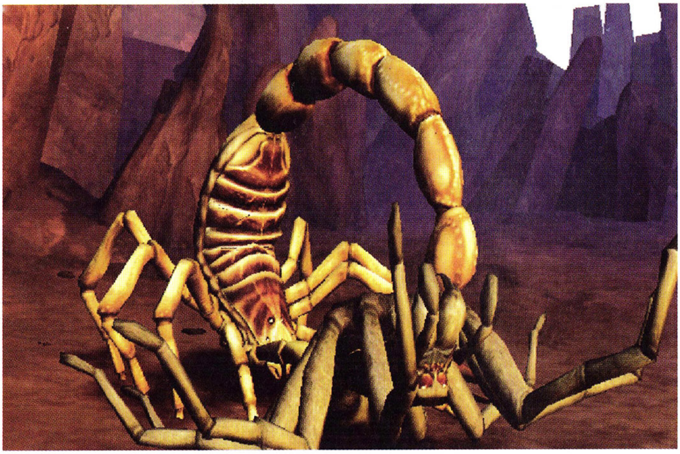
The playable creatures are deadly. The bosses, like this Gila monster, are deadlier. Watch out or you'll end up as a snack.

"We've always wanted to do something different," admits Itkowitz. "I mean, racing's our bread and butter, [but] I've always wanted to do a game that was an action-adventure, which is the genre that we normally play. All the guys on the team have played God of War, played Zelda games. We play first-person shooters. We play a lot of non-racing titles. And so we all wanted to bring that experience to bear on a different type of project. It's been really liberating and...we're really grateful for the opportunity to finally be able to go and do it."





[Below] When playing as the scorpion, you can polish off weakened foes with vicious gesture-controlled finishing moves.



Doing Whatever an Arachnid Can

Deadly Creatures got its start as an idea that came to Itkowitz in a dream in late 2006, just as Rainbow was brainstorming for new game ideas. "I woke up that morning with this dream where I was playing as a snake slithering through the grass," he reveals, "and I was using the Wii remote to slither, and then reared up and struck at a mouse. I woke up and I was like, 'That's a really cool concept just for a Wii application!'"

The dream evolved into a game idea in which the player would be able to control numerous kinds of creepy, crawly, dangerous critters. As the game concept began to take shape, the small development team—initially only eight people, now approximately 30—decided that some creatures would be more fun to control than others. The snake and other creatures were dropped, and the scorpion and the tarantula were elevated into the starring roles.

"The game eventually whittled down to those two, and the tone became much more serious and intense," Itkowitz describes. "We really wanted to play this up and not just make an action-adventure game, but blend in elements of survival horror and make a really immersive, scary, memorable experience. Don't portray it as clinical as one of those documentaries; play it up like it's an action movie."

That means that although Deadly Creatures is rooted in reality, it isn't restricted by it. The scale is small—your controllable creatures are only about four inches long, after all—but the action is being portrayed with big-time flair. In the microcosm of the game, the arachnids are savage, destructive monsters.

"One of the ways that we thought about it was, 'If you were one of these creatures, what would you want to be able to do?'" says art director Brent Ashe. "So as a scorpion, knowing that you're confined—you can't put a machine gun on the back of a scorpion or have a scorpion fly—but if you were grounded like a scorpion was, what would you do? And that's how we came up with what you'll see. Like unlocking the pincers so that you can battle with your two arms. Do they do that in real life? No. But if you were a scorpion, it'd be really cool to be able to do that."

Both the scorpion and the tarantula have a robust set of moves that make use of Wii's capabilities, but the creatures have their own distinct roles in the game.

"We've kind of characterized it so that the tarantula is like a ninja," Itkowitz states. "He's agile and he can bounce around, get around enemies during combat, but then he also uses that agility to navigate the environment, to get to places via several mechanics that the scorpion can't. The scorpion's more of a tank. He's a bruiser; he's a pummeler. He uses his pincers and a stinger, and then when he's traversing the environment he'll burrow underneath things or bash through things."

As the scorpion, you can press the B and Z Buttons to control your right and left pincers respectively, and swing forward with the Wii remote to sting with your tail. A sideways swing of the remote lets you perform a tail swipe, while the C Button allows you to block, moving the nunchuk lets you dodge, and the A Button locks on to enemies. (Note that the controls may change in the final game.) After an enemy critter is sufficiently weakened, you can press B and Z simultaneously to initiate a foe-specific finishing move. By following a sequence of onscreen prompts, you'll eliminate your foe in satisfyingly visceral fashion—for example, lifting up both the remote and the nunchuk to hoist your enemy into the air, flicking them both downward to slam it into the ground, then swinging the remote to impale your adversary with your stinger. As you proceed through the game, you'll obtain additional moves, both for combat (such as additional combos) and for exploration (such as digging through certain walls).

Though the tarantula lacks the finishing moves and raw power of his counterpart, he makes up for it with increased maneuverability and stealth-based assets. In addition to possessing motion-based strikes, swipes, and dodges, the tarantula can use the remote's direct-pointing capability to ensnare enemies with webs and activate a lethal mid-range pounce attack. If you can attack enemies while staying undetected, you can slay them—or at least severely injure them—with a single assassinlike blow. Unlike with the scorpion, you can make the tarantula jump on command with a press of the Z Button, plus you can eventually walk on the ceiling and use the Wii remote to grapple from point to point via your web.

"I'm sure there will be some entomologists out there that'll throw up their hands and go, 'A tarantula can't crawl across the ceiling or wall-jump using a zipline of silk!'" confesses Itkowitz. "But it's fun for gameplay and, for most of the audience, it's the kind of thing that they would expect, so we want to deliver the most fun experience that we can."

One challenge the creative team faced was designing a world that not only opens up gradually as you gain more abilities, but one that can be navigated by both creatures—the tarantula going over and around, the scorpion going through and under.

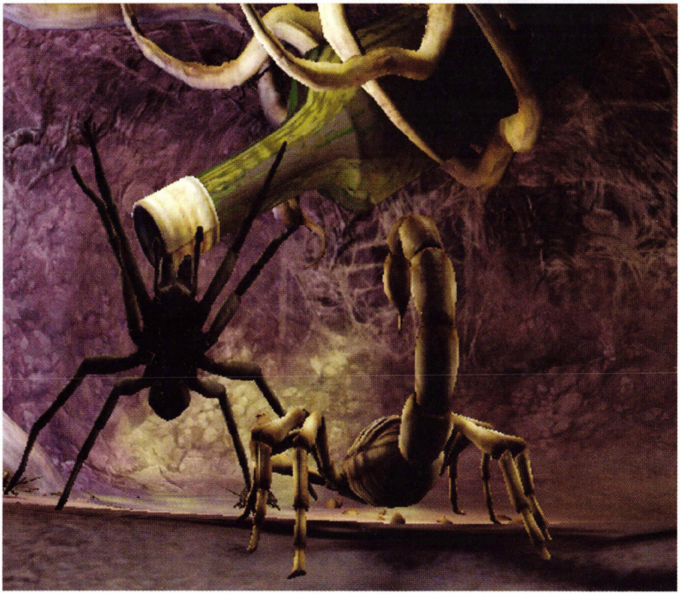
"It's been really interesting... in that respect, to make sure to not just have all the areas linked to one another like they would in a Zelda or a Metroid or a Castlevania, but make it work for two diverse characters," Itkowitz says. "There's a lot of moving parts, but I think it's really going to hold people's interests."

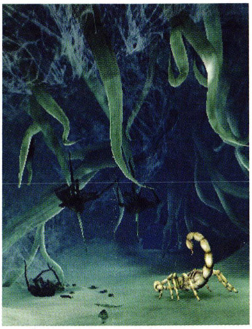
A Tangled Web

Even though you play as both a tarantula and a scorpion, the two creatures aren't exactly allies. You'll alternate between the two as you play through the game's 10 chapters (some of which span multiple areas), and at times the two protagonists will even fight each other—one more part of Rainbow's attempt to go beyond what people expect from a typical adventure game.

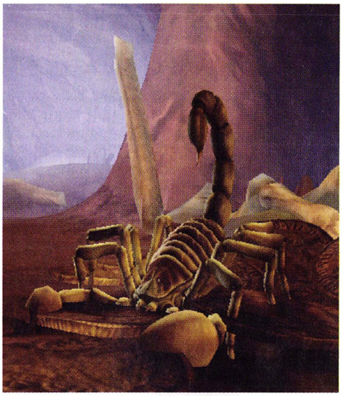
"One of the very first things we do in the game is that you're playing as the tarantula, and you come across an enemy scorpion, which is [the one you play as later], and you fight it," Itkowitz describes. "Then before you beat it down to kill it, it escapes via a cut-scene into the earth, and that sets up the beginning of the [next] chapter. Later on when you're playing as the scorpion, you'll encounter that same tarantula again, which is your other playable character, in the last place that you left it when you last stopped playing as the tarantula."

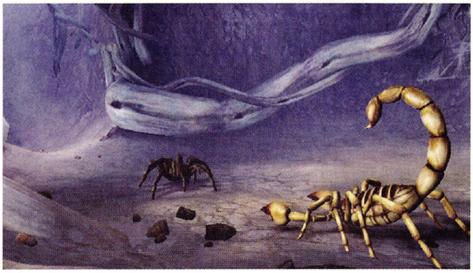
Set in the Sonoran Desert of the American southwest, the journey will take the creatures from the dry, scrubby, exterior landscape to dark, moody, claustrophobic underground passages where bug corpses hang from roots, beetles grotesquely emerge from buried bottles, and black widows feast on ensnared prey. Eventually you'll visit set pieces such as an old, rusted-out truck and a mid-20th-century gas station that seems to beckon you from the distance. A series of point-earning adventure goals help push the arachnids forward—escaping from a bramble thicket, exterminating an enemy wasp nest, or reaching a drainage area, for example—while an overarching narrative ties everything together.



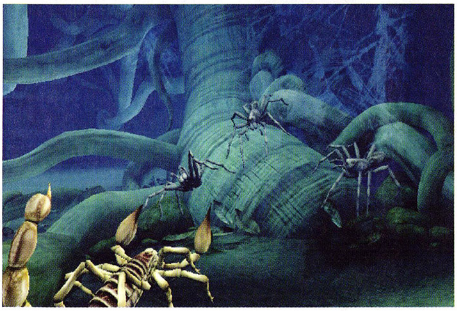


Small visual details, like impaled insects hanging from roots, add to the unsettling atmosphere.





[Below] In real life, wolf spiders are solitary animals. But in Deadly Creatures, they roam in packs.



"It really doesn't sell well to say, 'Oh, you're just going across the desert to find food,' or, 'You're going across the desert to find a mate,' which essentially amounts to an arachnid booty call. We wanted to find something that was a little more interesting than that," says Itkowitz. "We've layered in this creepy desert storyline with these two guys out in the desert looking for buried Civil War gold out there. It plays to the idea that the desert is really built of layers of history."

The game adopts a fly-on-the-wall approach to storytelling; as the creatures crawl through the desert, they bear witness to the humans' exploits from an arachnid's-eye view and encounter objects from the world above—an old gas mask, skeletal remains buried in a coffin, forgotten newspapers and documents, a bag of coins.

"As you explore the entire game world as the tarantula and the scorpion, you're witnessing this storyline going on around you," notes Itkowitz. "It's really neat, because [the humans] are looking for something buried in the desert, and you keep finding where that stuff is buried, and then you have to get out of the way as maybe they start to dig down to unearth it."

Employing a technique from films such as *Jackie Brown* and *Sunset Blvd.*, the game is told in flashback, opening with the burning remains of the aforementioned gas station, and allowing players to piece together the story that led to the explosive event.

"We're sort of building our own urban legend as we go, especially with the way it starts off," Ashe states. "This whole thing's destroyed, and [a human] is muttering about this and that. Clearly this guy's insane, but you realize the truth as you get through this whole thing."

Creatures Great and Small

Tarantulas and scorpions, of course, aren't the only creatures roaming the desert. The dev team has enlisted an entire menagerie of creepy critters to serve as your foes. Smaller enemies like crickets and pill bugs act as your prey; when you catch and kill them, your health will replenish. Other enemies pose much more of a threat.

"We looked at hundreds of desert creatures and then whittled it down to the list based on what do they look like, how cool were they, how different from each other are they going to be," Itkowitz explains. "[For example,] the horned lizard, which some people call the horny toad, is a creature in our game. It's like this little armored tank with spikes all over its back, and you have to attack its underbelly. One of the things it does in real life [is that] it constricts blood vessels in its face and squirts bloody mucus out of its eye. And so, hey, we had another projectile-based attack there."

Other enemies include wolf spiders (which in the game often attack in packs), bombardier beetles (which defend themselves, like in real life, with superheated liquid), wasps called tarantula hawks (which are known to lay eggs inside of tarantulas and kill them from the inside out), and leopard lizards and Gila monsters (which can be thought of as smaller equivalents of the velociraptors and Tyrannosaurus rex, respectively, from *Jurassic Park*). Mammals, too, have their place on the list of vicious foes.

"You'll encounter the rats underground and around that truck and junkyard area—rats swarming out of pieces of garbage," Itkowitz describes. "You see the truck from a distance, and when you finally make your way up underneath the truck, you're looking up at the cab, the truck is laying on its side, with one of the doors ripped off, and the glove box swings open and a bunch of rats jump out and run down to attack you in this clearing right before the truck. It's a really neat moment."

Near the end of the game, you'll even have to face the toughest predator of all. "If you think about it," says senior designer Devin Knudson, "in reality, any time a human and a bug encounter each other, it's usually a quick affair and doesn't usually end up that good for the bug. In the same way, we kind of incorporated that into our game, too. That is the most deadly creature—the human."

The Sound and the Fury

To complete the package, the Rainbow crew is going all out when it comes to the game's audiovisual presentation. Every texture in the game is hand-painted—a rarity, especially among games with such a somber motif—to create a unique, unified, fairly realistic visual style, while an earthy yet flexible color palette helps establish the mood.

"We can give each section a very signature feel," states Ashe, "and it also really plays into the emotion of it too. When you're in the coffin it just feels much more deathly and sullen. In contrast, you go right to the fissure [in] which you're getting a hint of the surface with the sun sort of beaming through, so you're getting that feeling of warmth."

The music and sound are equally important in setting the tone, if not more so. "One of the things that was really important to us for the project as a whole was...for audio to sell the experience that we were going after," proclaims executive producer Nick Wlodyka. "It's what's really creating the mood and the tension in the environments."

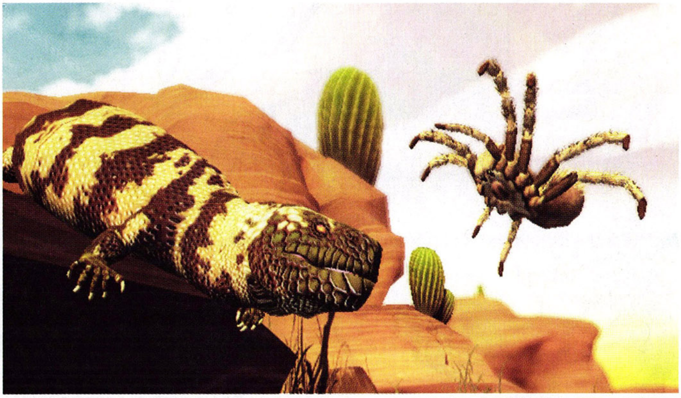
Composer David Lowmiller is taking full advantage of Rainbow's in-house sound studio to record an original, dynamic, horror-movie-inspired soundtrack. "The whole thing is kind of shaping up to be ambient and weird and spacey," he says. "I've got a lap steel guitar in there and harmonicas and a whole bunch of Western-ish instruments. We're making strange noises on them to kind of hint at the desert vibe, but we're hiding it in there so it's not an overtly *3:10 to Yuma* kind of thing."

Lowmiller is also responsible for recording and mixing Deadly Creatures' library of much-larger-than-life sound effects.

"We've decided to treat all the insects like aliens and predators and things just way off the scale from this tiny little insect, and the same thing with the reptiles," explains Lowmiller. "All the impacts and stabs and crushes that you're hearing, we've taken watermelons and beat them up with martial arts weapons. The job has its perks, right? Bread dough and a summer ham—we got 'em pretty bad."

Although gamers will have to wait many months to see if all the elements come together and all the effort pays off, indications so far point to Deadly Creatures being one of the most original and interesting games to come to Wii.

"It's been a lot of hard work, a roller coaster of emotions at times getting to the point that we're at now, but everybody's incredibly excited and proud about what they've done," states Itkowitz. Arachnophobes, beware—the game should be crawling into stores in time for the holiday season.

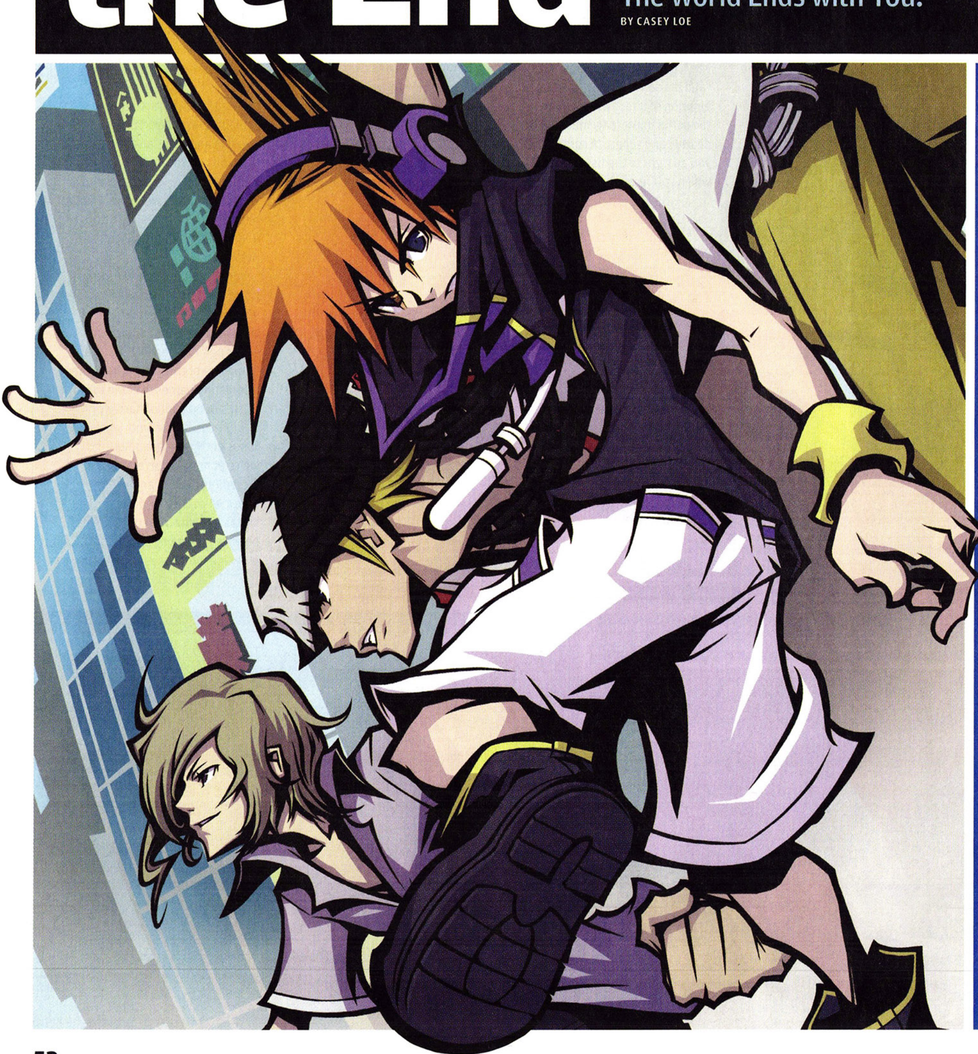


[Above] The assassinlike tarantula is much more agile than the scorpion. He can pounce on enemies from a distance.

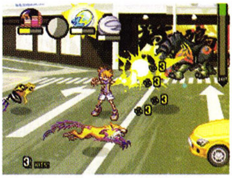
Beginning at the End

The RPG genre begins anew in Square Enix's *The World Ends with You.*

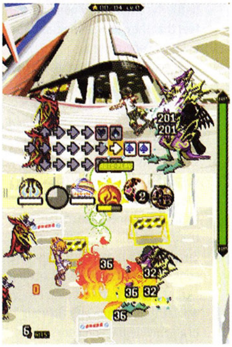
BY CASEY LOE



The World Ends with You doesn't merely offer a few new twists on an old genre—it's a game composed of virtually nothing but twists. This new action-RPG collaboration from Square Enix and Jupiter (who last worked together on Kingdom Hearts: Chain of Memories) takes huge risks with nearly every aspect of the genre, offering a battle system, setting, structure, visual style, and soundtrack that are unlike anything we've ever seen before. It can't have been easy to make so many gambles pay off at once, but Square Enix seems to have hit the jackpot with this delightfully weird DS exclusive.



Neku's psychs range from melee combos to flashy pyrotechnics displays, each executable with a few swipes of the DS stylus.

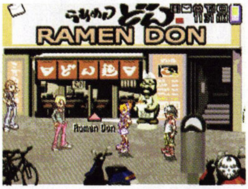


The World Ends with You is set in the Shibuya district of Tokyo, which you probably see stock footage of every time the local news reports on some wacky trend in Japan. In fact, its famous pedestrian-packed "scramble" of crisscrossing crosswalks is exactly where hero Neku awakens to the fact that he's trapped in a mysterious competition on which he's staked his very existence. Without knowing how or why he entered, Neku will have to team up with other players to solve a series of riddles and survive the attacks of the game-running Reapers, who have the power to "erase" any player who stumbles into their traps.

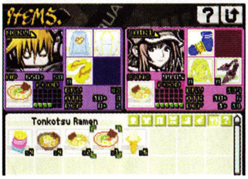
It gets stranger. Neku's Shibuya is on a slightly separate plane from the one where he used to live, so he can't interact directly with Shibuya's teeming throngs. To complete his missions, he'll have to employ psychic powers that allow him to read thoughts and influence the behavior of people by projecting subliminal "memes" into their minds, or answer their questions with a touch-screen Ouija board. Neku's plane is also where negative thoughts—known as Noise—dwell, and Neku can clear the minds of normal Shibuyans (or just grind for money and experience points) by defeating the Noise in combat.

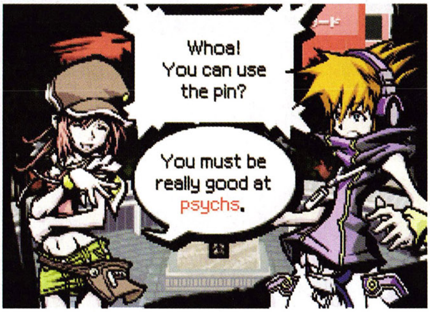
That's where it gets *even stranger.* The battles unfold in real time on both screens of the DS, with Neku battling on the lower screen and his partner fighting different instances of the same foes on the upper screen. You'll use the stylus to control Neku, dragging him around the battlefield and tapping, slashing, and circling foes to trigger an ever-growing arsenal of powers, which can unleash energy waves, start fires, cause earthquakes, and telekinetically fling cars and signs around the battlefield. You'll control your upper-screen partner with either the Control Pad or the four buttons (for lefties), pressing down and up to evade attacks and left and right to launch offensive combos. And since playing two games at once isn't enough to occupy all six eyes of the mutant spider/human hybrids for whom this game is apparently intended, there are also simple card games like Concentration and War at the top of the upper screen, which are played by selecting the correct combos whenever Neku's partner attacks. If you can spare enough mental bandwidth to triumph at those games as well, you'll charge special attacks that can damage all the Noise on the battlefield and recover a bit of your team's shared life bar.

It sounds complicated, but don't let that discourage you. The mechanics are quite simple at the start of the game, with new layers of complexity being added gradually throughout your quest. (Having not yet completed it, I can only imagine that by the end of the game I will be controlling a third character on a second wirelessly linked DS with my toes, while having to yodel the game's theme music into the DS's microphone.) While flitting from screen to screen to play multiple games simultaneously is an enjoyably frantic challenge, beginners are free to focus on Neku and let the computer control the rest. Indeed, of all the game's many new ideas,



Neku and Shiki don't have time for proper meals. They order their ramen to go, equip it on the item screen, and enjoy a stat-boosting slurp after every fight.

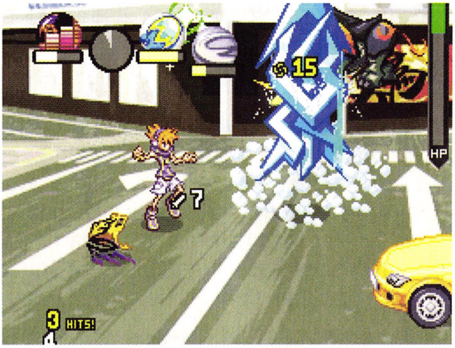


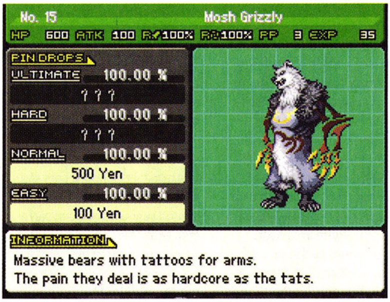

Whoa! You can use the pin?
You must be really good at psychs.

its system for catering to players of all skill levels may be its best. Casual players can focus on a single slice of the action and ignore the rest, while serious players can enjoy all of the considerable depth the game has to offer, and even increase the level of challenge by voluntarily making enemies stronger or lowering the levels of their heroes. The harder you make it, the better the prizes you'll earn, so skilled players who pick up the battle system quickly need never feel that they're wasting time with low-level encounters.

The screenshots on these pages will give you a good idea of the game's striking visual flair, but the soundtrack is something you need to hear to believe. Over a dozen singers were hired to perform vocals for nearly every track in the game, and the end result is a high-energy mélange of dance, trance, and hip-hop with English, Engrish, and Japanese vocals. The songs seem charmingly innocuous at first, but rest assured that they will lay their meme eggs in your brain, and you'll find yourself humming their nonsense lyrics at inappropriate moments *for the rest of your life. ("I can't believe this is a dream/My lucent orb is fading bright...* What's that? It's my turn to shovel dirt on grandpa's coffin?")

I could go on and on, but I don't want to ruin all the surprises. Rest assured that the developers have taken every time-honored convention of the RPG genre as a challenge, and come up with imaginative replacements for just about all of them. If you've ever thought that video games were out of new ideas, Neku will be waiting at the Shibuya Scramble on April 22 to prove you wrong.




No. 15 Mosh Grizzly

HP 600 ATK 100 R✓100% R?100% PP 3 EXP 35

PIN DROPS

ULTIMATE 100.00 %

? ? ?

HARD 100.00 %

? ? ?

NORMAL 100.00 %

500 Yen

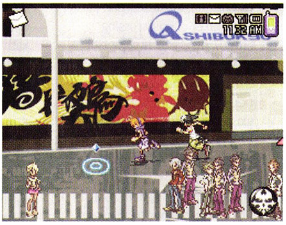
EASY 100.00 %

100 Yen

INFORMATION

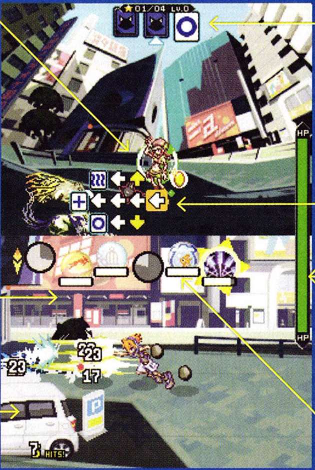
Massive bears with tattoos for arms.
The pain they deal is as hardcore as the tats.

[Left] Always be kind to others, or your negative emotions might spawn a bear with tattoo arms in another plane of existence.



ONE BATTLE, TWO SYSTEMS

What in the world is going on here? A quick diagram of how TWEWY's two-screen battle system works.



THE PUCK The green glow surrounding Shiki reveals that she has the "puck," a ball of energy that boosts a character's attack power when you control him or her directly. As long as you keep alternating characters, the puck will keep bouncing between them, and the more it bounces, the stronger its influence will grow.

NEKU'S BATTLEFIELD On the lower screen you can use the stylus to drag Neku freely over his half of the battlefield or to execute Neku's special "psych" powers to attack the Noise.

BATTLEFIELD DEBRIS Everything on the battlefield can be used as a weapon. Telekinesis psychs allow Neku to fling cars and signs at his foes, and some of the Noise can use similar tactics against him.

SHIKI'S MINIGAME The three cards at the top of the screen are a little game of Concentration. If Shiki can accumulate enough stars by picking the right combos, she'll charge a powerful special attack.

SHIKI'S COMBOS When Shiki attacks (press left or right on the Control Pad), she can execute one of the three combos shown onscreen. Each ends with a different symbol, and if Shiki picks the combo beneath the middle card at the top of the screen, she'll earn a star.

THE SHARED LIFE BAR Neku and his partner (in this case, Shiki) each contribute their individual HP totals to a single life bar. When it empties, both characters will collapse. That's game over—retry or face erasure.

NEKU'S PINS Each of the scores of pins that Neku finds on his quest will give him access to a new psych power. In each battle, he can use whichever pins are equipped to his currently selected "deck." (The grayed-out pins are recharging from overuse.)

BRAVE NEW WORLD

While working as the animation director of the Kingdom Hearts series, Tatsuya Kando earned the trust of Kingdom Hearts creator Tetsuya Nomura, who asked Mr. Kando to direct The World Ends with You. When contacted by Nintendo Power, Mr. Kando was kind enough to answer a few questions about his directorial debut.

NINTENDO POWER How long was The World Ends with You in development? We've heard that it was an unusually long development cycle.

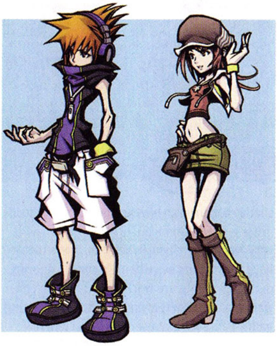
TATSUYA KANDO The entire development process took around two and a half years, since we had been considering many new ideas from before the release of the Nintendo DS. The first six months saw endless meetings as the three of us drafted and redrafted the project plan, and another six months were spent reviewing the plans with Jupiter. There were many ideas that didn't make it, and the system underwent several drastic changes. In the end, I think that this was time well spent, considering the variety of complex elements that are now seamlessly intertwined in the completed product.

I understand your development team has a lot of staff in common with the Kingdom Hearts: Chain of Memories team. Were any of the ideas in The World Ends with You originally considered for the Kingdom Hearts series?

There aren't any ideas that had originally been planned for Kingdom Hearts, per se. Since the Nintendo DS hardware is very different in nature from what we had worked with in the past, we were asked to put forth concepts and ideas that were very DS-specific. In fact, one of our objectives during development was to create something completely new—something none of us had made before—so I think that the world, scenario, gameplay, and graphics, among a variety of other elements in this game, are very unique. Challenging ourselves in this way was, of course, possible because we had the experience and skills gained from working on titles like Kingdom Hearts.

How was the original idea for the game conceived? What was Mr. Nomura's involvement with the game?

The ideas came together during development, mainly through brainstorm sessions. We were able to think freely, sans the restrictions that might have been placed on our ideas in a title of a larger scope. What we had decided in the earliest stages was that the dual screen would be used simultaneously in battle, and that the story would take place in modern-day Tokyo. Continuously exchanging ideas through brainstorm sessions, the core staff members were able to work steadily toward our goal of providing fresh concepts and content with complexity, ultimately creating a game that would be fun to play. Nomura gave us stimulating feedback from the creative producer's vantage point throughout the development process.



The World Ends with You has a wonderful soundtrack. Why did you decide to use primarily vocal tracks? Where did you find so many different vocalists?

Since the game takes place in modern-day Shibuya, I had asked our composer, Takeharu Ishimoto, to come up with various types of music that one might actually hear when walking through the streets of Shibuya. That was about the extent of my direction, and the rest was left up to him, so when I heard samples of his music for the first time I was surprised to find that it had vocals—something I hadn't anticipated at all for the battle music of a DS title. But I told him to move forward with it. I was sure that users would be surprised with these tracks, just as I had been. Some of the battle music in the Japanese release doesn't have vocals, but the North American release will include brand-new tracks with even more vocals. The Japanese fans might be envious. The singers are either friends of Ishimoto's, or artists that he discovered and sought out for this project.

Why is there so much English-language music in a game set in Japan? Will the few Japanese-vocal tracks be preserved for the North American version?

That probably has to do with Ishimoto's style. English songs are very popular in Japan, and I think that understanding the language isn't the most important part of enjoying music. Some people are satisfied if they can simply listen to good music, and even feel that certain words sound "cooler" when pronounced in English. When it came to music, our decisions were made based on whether a track sounded cool or not, and there was never a rule that the songs had to be in Japanese. I think this is something that really sets The World Ends with You apart from other titles, as we never limited ourselves to creating "game music" when it came to the soundtrack. The North American release will definitely have Japanese songs! It would be great to hear what you think of them!

Why did you decide to set your game specifically in Shibuya? Is there anything about the area that you feel Americans should know in order to fully appreciate the game?

The main reason is that the members of the development team reside in Japan, and in this country Shibuya is very symbolic as the center of youth culture. Shibuya was the most suitable place, in our minds, as the setting for our 15-year-old characters to embark on their adventure. Many of our North American users will probably not be familiar with Shibuya, but in playing The World Ends with You they will be able to experience Shibuya vicariously through the main character, Neku. The map included in this game is actually almost identical to the Shibuya in real life. If you have the opportunity to visit Japan after playing this game, you might even be able to use The World Ends with You as your guide through the streets of Shibuya, and might even fall under the illusion that you've actually become Neku.

The title "The World Ends with You" is really catchy, but quite a bit darker than the Japanese title, It's a Wonderful World. What is it a reference to?

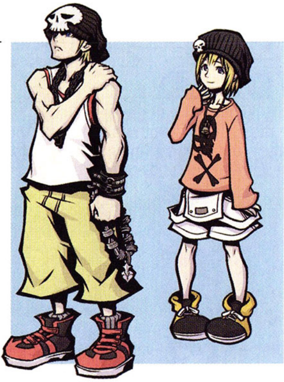
Although the Japanese and English titles are expressed in different words, the fundamental message is the same. We wanted a title that would suit a story that depicts the growth and development of our protagonist, Neku. We hope that this title will provide insight on the various themes that are present in this game: the bond between people, different forms of communication, and how the young characters will seek answers to the experiences they will be facing.

What was the inspiration for The World Ends with You's unique battle system? Have you

been pleased with the reaction of players?
At our meetings, we tried to come up with many ideas that were unheard of—things that no one else would think of—and the dual-screen battle system was one such idea. I'm sure this concept was considered in theory at some point, but no one probably thought to make it happen. In reality it took a considerable amount of time to make this concept function as a game, but I think we were able to create something special and unique as a result. The action on the bottom screen is especially intriguing, because it makes use of the DS touch screen to its fullest for an intense battle experience. Players can unleash an extensive variety of psychic abilities by simple movements of the stylus. I think this is one of the most exhilarating and enjoyable aspects of this game. Among our Japanese users there are those that have been playing for tens of hours. From the developer's point of view, we are very pleased that we were able to create something that players can immerse themselves in.

The World Ends with You is the only game I know of that has separate action scenes unfolding on both screens of the Nintendo DS. Was implementing that a programming challenge?
Since these battles make full use of the DS hardware's potential, as you can imagine we maximized its programming to a point where it would be impossible to implement anything more. During battle, players can control everything from the characters, enemies and psychic abilities, to objects in the background, and all this control is doubled because of the way we've used the dual screens. On top of everything we have a system linking the actions taking place in the top and bottom screens, so there were definitely many things that the programmer had to manage. We had him working extra hard to put it all together. I think it must have been like working on two individual games at once.

Games that are as original as The World Ends with You are exceptionally rare. Do you attribute that to a lack of original ideas among developers, or the difficulty of marketing original ideas?
I don't think there's ever a lack of ideas. If we run out of ideas we're out of a job. New ideas are hidden all over the place, taking many different shapes and forms. I have to admit it's a difficult process to find them, but at the same time it is very fun and satisfying when I do. Users today have a very good eye when it comes to figuring out which games are worth their time. No one wants to be the first in line to purchase a boring game. I am sure that users feel a certain risk when buying a new IP, as they don't offer the security that an established title does. I think it's our responsibility as developers to constantly provide entertaining gaming experiences so that users don't have to worry about quality when purchasing a game.



What was the inspiration for the difficulty slider? It strikes me as a great idea—any hope that we might see that make the jump to the Kingdom Hearts or Final Fantasy franchises one day?
There are many difficult RPG titles in Japan, and many users give up before seeing the ending. Everyone who buys a game should be able to see the ending!! That is the development team's wish—and it was our goal from the start to create a game where anyone would be able to reach the ending without getting bored or annoyed. Simply making it easy would be disappointing to core gamers, so we created a system in which raising the difficulty level increases the reward. The difficulty level can be adjusted in any situation, and while there is no penalty for lowering it, when it is raised players are rewarded with items of an appropriate value, so everyone can play at their own pace. This system was very well received internally as well, so I am sure that a similar concept will be implemented for other projects. I am pretty sure that games that I direct in the future will have a similar system.

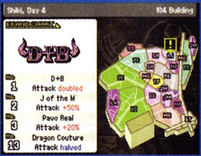
What were you hoping to accomplish by allowing players to level up their skills by shutting off the game for long periods of time?
If you become bored with a game half way through and put it down to take a break, you might not feel like getting back into it in a few days' time. But what if your BP level increased during the time you'd been away from the game? If you're a little stronger than before, you might be able to advance with renewed strength! This was the thought process we were hoping to encourage with this system. This is also part of the wish that was discussed earlier, to have as many users as possible reach the ending.

During development, did you consider multiplayer options, such as dividing up the combat screens, or allowing players to duel each other with their custom decks?
We definitely considered multiplayer options, but as we moved farther along in development we decided to scratch the entire idea. Our primary concern was to make the single-player experience a well-rounded one; otherwise we felt that players wouldn't be able to fully enjoy the game. Working on this title was definitely a learning experience, and looking back I can now see things I wasn't able to in the midst of development. This newfound knowledge might be reflected in a follow-up title if there is an opportunity for one.

Have you been satisfied with the reactions of fans to the game in Japan? Would you like to pursue another original IP for your next project, or work with an established franchise like Kingdom Hearts again?
Since this was a new IP, we did have our worries until it was completed. Fortunately, it was very well-received by Japanese users, and the development team has happily heaved a big sigh of relief. There have been requests for a sequel as well, so we hope to be able to answer to that some day. I am currently involved in the development of Final Fantasy Versus XIII, but working on an original IP was definitely a very exciting and stimulating experience, so I would love to take on the challenge again in the future.

THE FICKLE HAND OF FASHION

Fashion changes quickly on the trendy streets of Shibuya, and TWEWY hasn't neglected that aspect of the Shibuya experience. A dozen or so boutiques and shopping malls each deal in their own brand of clothing and psych pins, and if you're using the right brands at their peak of popularity, you'll get a healthy attack boost. But fashion is a matter of life and death: if you're caught wearing the least popular brand in town, the stat penalties could very well get you killed. I used to think Shibuyans were just vain, but apparently they've just been min/maxing all along! Who knew?



Shiki, Day 4
104 Building
BRAND CHART
D+B

No.	Brand	Effect
1	D+B	Attack doubled
2	J of the M	Attack +50%
3	Pavo Real	Attack +20%
13	Dragon Couture	Attack halved

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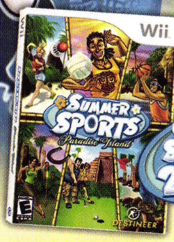

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7 Addictive Games

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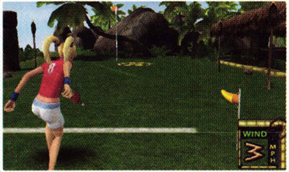

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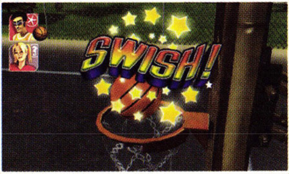

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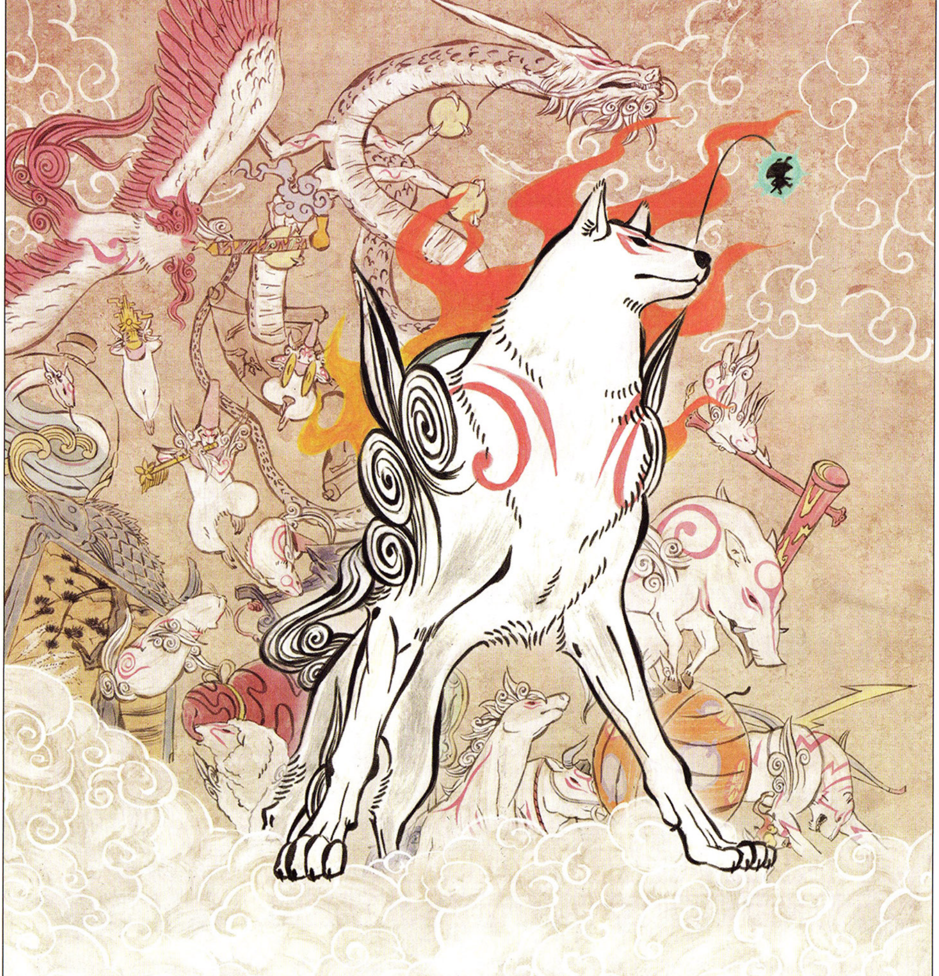


Natural BEAUTY

Developer Ready at Dawn paints bold strokes into the Wii version of Capcom's critically acclaimed adventure Okami.

BY CHRIS SHEPPERD

It's a shame that more gamers didn't get their hands on Okami when it was first released for PlayStation 2. One would think that a game that blends exquisite graphics, gameplay reminiscent of Zelda, and an original story would turn a few heads. But despite rousing support from critics, Okami didn't take off as well as it should have. Coming at the tail end of the PS2's life, the game was one of the most visually stunning titles released on the console.

Borrowing from various styles of traditional Japanese art, the visuals are a constant treat, from the beautiful scenery to the understated elegance of the main characters. Fortunately, once again the world will get the chance to experience the divine beauty of Okami. Ready at Dawn has worked meticulously to transition that beauty to Wii. With completely revamped controls that seem perfectly suited to the system, the second time for Okami should be a charm.

A LITTLE BACKSTORY

The story of Okami draws heavily from traditional Japanese mythology and religion—the characters you meet are ripped from Japanese tall tales, and the story itself is based on well-known fables. But you don't have to understand Japanese cultural history to get what's going on. At the beginning of the game, you are given an extensive backstory that tells a tale of the great warrior Nagi who, accompanied by a wild wolf named Shiranui, defeated Orochi, an eight-headed monster that terrorized the lands. One hundred years later, the monster has re-emerged and threatens the world.

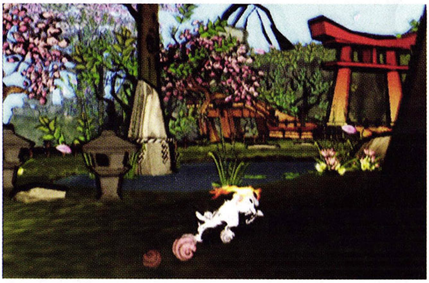
You play as Amaterasu, the goddess of light, who appears in the form of a wolf eerily similar to the one who defeated Orochi. Once again, darkness dominates the land—quite literally, in fact—and you must cleanse the countryside of an evil curse to allow light to return. But times have changed, and there's apparently no great warrior to aid you. It falls upon you almost exclusively to seek and defeat Orochi to restore order to the world.

Despite not talking (or maybe because of it), Amaterasu is a great leading character—her grace and speed leave an indelible impression. Little extra touches, such as flowers flowing from her paws as she runs, give her an air of divinity, constantly reminding you that she is much more than just a wolf. Accompanying her is an impish creature named Issun who does Amaterasu's talking for her, as well as keeps her on track when she gets lost. He's not much help in battle, and can't really figure out any tricky puzzles, but he provides comic relief and is a pleasure to have as a companion. However, you'll eventually learn that Issun's part in the story is far more than that of the jester and guide.

INTO THE WILD

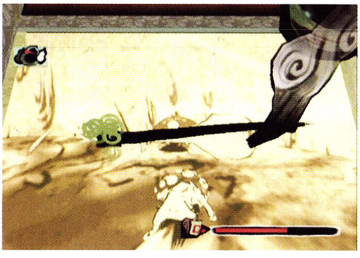
The quest to restore peace and light to the world will take you across large regions, as well as through a variety of towns and dungeons. That's one aspect of Okami that can't be overstated—it is just about the most expansive game of its kind. And Okami doesn't follow the clichéd level design of an ice world, a lava world, etc.; the areas feel unique, more realistic and less contrived than many games in the genre. Zelda fans will instantly feel an Ocarina of Time vibe due to rolling hills, dense forests, and frozen plains. There are some fascinating places to visit, as well, such as a half-submerged pirate ship or (when you shrink to the size of an insect) the innards of a slumbering king.

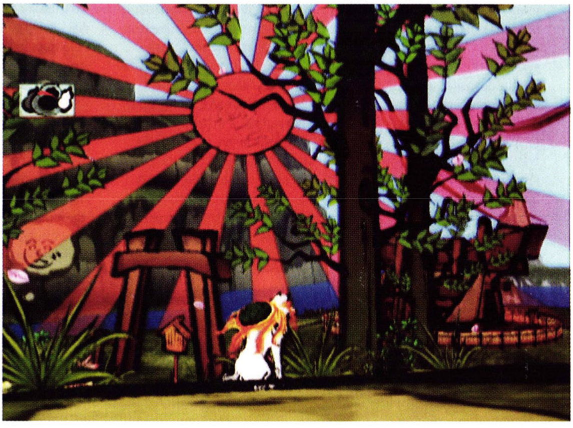
Every region is packed with secrets and entertaining side quests for you to discover. The inhabitants of the land may need you to run an errand or recover a stolen item for them, or maybe they'll challenge you to a quick foot race. There are also more-intricate minigames to play, including fishing and digging challenges. There are so many of these diversions that you could spend hours just trying to discover and complete them. Fortunately, the game recognizes its own scope, providing an exceptional game log and map that indicates your next major destination.

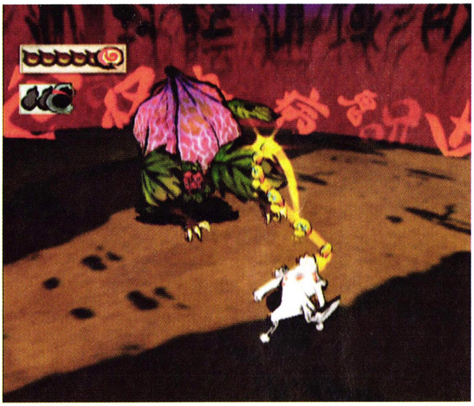


Sakuya
Ah... Okami Amaterasu...
Beloved mother to us all.

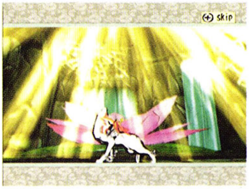
Drawing a line to slash enemies [below] and drawing a circle to make the sun rise [right] are but two of your painting powers.







[Right] Rosary-type weapons deliver a succession of rapid hits. Other weapons are slower but stronger.



MORE BARK THAN BITE

One of Okami's most refreshing aspects is the way it handles character growth. While fighting foes yields items and money (which you can use to buy new weapons, techniques, and nonbattle skills), you actually earn experience points—or praise, as it's called—by seeking out ways to make the world more beautiful and peaceful. As you wander around ancient Japan, you can feed wild animals, heal damaged portions of the land, and restore dead trees to life with the power of your Celestial Brush. Accumulated praise can then be used to increase your maximum health or other parameters.

That's not to say that the combat system isn't elaborate or fun; it's just the opposite—the battles are entertaining enough that you'll do them even when you don't have to. As you wander around, you'll encounter dangerous monsters just about everywhere. Enemy battles aren't random—you can see where the monsters are, and you can typically decide if you want to engage in battle or not. When you begin a battle, a wall appears around the fighting area and enemies appear. From that point on, it's all up to you about how you want to fight—you can confront your enemies head on with physical attacks, stand back and use the Celestial Brush to cause different effects, and use items that can turn the tide of battle.

By swinging the Wii remote, you'll lash out with physical strikes, be it with a glaive, rosary, or shieldlike reflector. Amaterasu has a primary and secondary weapon slot; the weapons behave differently depending on their type and where they're equipped. For example, a weapon that might strike with heavy, short attacks while in the primary weapon slot may become a shield when equipped in the secondary slot. And the Celestial Brush strokes are even more varied (more on that later). Amaterasu can also dodge attacks by flicking the nunchuk left and right. The battles are artistry in motion—Okami delivers an amazing sense of satisfaction when you take out a tough monster using the right combination of moves and brush strokes.

DELICATE STROKES

While there are plenty of similarities to the modern Zelda games, some distinguishing elements let you know you're not playing as Link (besides not wearing a green hat). For one, Amaterasu has no Hookshots or lanterns to help her along. She has only the power of the Celestial Brush—which lets her paint directly over the environment to perform all kinds of different tasks. You press the B Button to stop time, then use the Wii remote to move the brush. To apply paint, you hold down the A Button. The paint is not simply for decoration—you can fill in paint over a broken bridge to reconstruct it, or create a swirling loop to raise a mighty wind. You can also use brush techniques in battle. Slice through an enemy with a straight horizontal stroke, or draw a bomb to blow the armor off a foe. The epic boss fights take particular advantage of the Celestial Brush—as you'd expect, you often have to incorporate a newly learned technique in a boss battle. You'll earn new brush techniques as you continue through your adventure; eventually, you'll be able to harness the powers of water, fire, lightning, and even time via the Celestial Brush.

While the Celestial Brush was one of Okami's standout features on PS2, we're hopeful that it will be even better on Wii. The point-and-paint controls seem like a perfect fit—when we first heard of the Wii remote, we immediately thought of how Okami could benefit. Although the version we played still needed some tweaking, there's no doubt that free-form painting is faster and more responsive than using an analog stick. The Wii version of the game also benefits from a true widescreen presentation, allowing you to see more of Okami's visual majesty than ever before.

It's not often that gamers get a second chance to experience a wonderful game like Okami. Whether you've played it before or not, this should be one adventure not to be missed.

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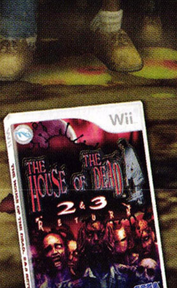

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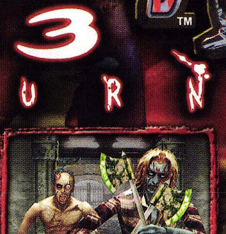

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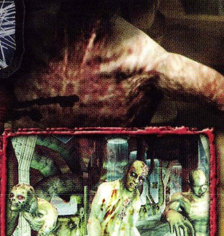

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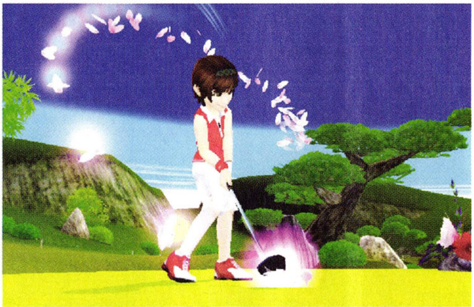
Welcome to the Club

Nice shot! Camelot hits the links with We Love Golf! on Wii.

BY JUSTIN CHENG AND CHRIS HOFFMAN



Golf games may be everywhere these days, but one company does 'em best: Camelot. From Hot Shots Golf on the PlayStation to Mario Golf on the Nintendo 64, Camelot knows how to make an accessible and, more importantly, fun golf game that appeals to hardcore and casual gamers alike. Partnering with Capcom, Camelot is hard at work on the North American version of We Love Golf! for Wii, fine-tuning the controls—which combine traditional three-button-press controls with Wii motion controls—and adding some new features, such as online play. We chat with Camelot's founders, brothers Hiroyuki and Shugo Takahashi, to find out more.

What sets We Love Golf! apart from other golf games that Camelot has made in the past? How did your design approach differ from that of your other golf franchises?

As you know, the sports series of Mario Golf/Tennis were created by Camelot and have become very popular. We personally love the games as well. However, some sports-game fans don't seem to play the games because they are seen as Mario games, although we truly believe that the titles are highly accomplished as genuine sports games. So for this title, we balanced a feeling of real life with a sense of the Mario world for the sports-game fans, and we hope that fans will be interested in the title.

The game's title, We Love Golf!, is a little unusual. Where did it come from?

Oh, really? We've never thought it to be an unusual title. "We Love Golf!" is a statement from us as creators who literally love the game of golf so much. With the name, we hoped for people who really love golf, as well as those who have never played golf, to find interest in our title.

Are you big fans of real-life golf? How much time do you spend on the links?

Of course we are big fans of golf. We literally love golf! However, it would be nice if we could get out to a golf course at least twice a month.... I wish I could love golf even more in my real life!

What is it that Camelot likes about making golf games?

In terms of golf games, we like to think about game designs that allow a player to become a "hero" by developing advanced skills. We take the essence of golf, concentrate that spirit and then transform it.

We're kind of surprised it's taken this long for Camelot to bring a golf game out for Wii. What are the benefits of the game coming out now instead of closer to the Wii's launch?

If a game is truly fun, players are able to figure that out very quickly, especially in North America and Europe. So, we believe that interest in a game won't change significantly whether it's right after the launch of a system or long after, as long as a title is original.

Your golf games have always

had a casual appeal, but is there anything in particular you did to cater to that casual audience on Wii?
As you pointed out, we always approach our design perspectives with the goal of creating a wide entrance, a profound depth, and hope to build a game that appeals to as many people as possible. Especially for this game and keeping the casual audience in mind, we decided to feature a Wii remote character named Chip. We felt that using the actual input device as a guide would be the best way to bring players into this full-fledged golf game!

What's your most important tip for those playing the game for the first time?
The greatest feature of We Love Golf! is the new control scheme, so please listen carefully to what Chip says to you. If you do, the first barrier will be significantly lowered. Also, please try to swing steadily and smoothly. In both real life and in We Love Golf!, a quick swing out of nowhere starting a backswing will not get you on the green. Also, make sure to put some muscle into your downswing!

The Sun Also Rises?

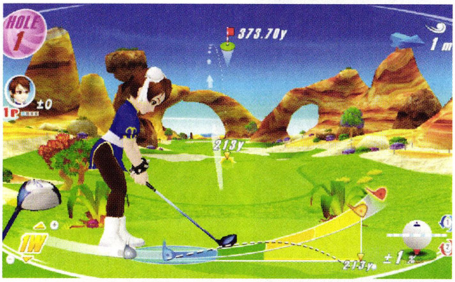
Aside from sports games like We Love Golf!, Camelot is famous for the Golden Sun games on GBA. When asked if we could expect another entry in the RPG series in the future, Shugo Takahashi says, "Unfortunately we cannot talk about out next projects, so please wait for our future announcements. A new Golden Sun? Well, I personally think that I want to play a new RPG, too...."

Were there any challenges in adapting the signature Camelot-style golf to Wii's motion controls? Why did you decide to adapt the three-click style of golfing instead of going with Wii Sports Golf-style gameplay?
In previous games, we converted the idea of sports—which is originally analog—into the digital input data and then input the data into a game system. But this time, we have to swing manually, thanks to the Wii's controls. So with We Love Golf!, we strove for highlighting the merits of executing an analog swing. Also for advanced players, it is absolutely necessary to include the ability to have a true influence over the ball in a way that is enjoyable, which is one of the core concepts in We Love Golf!. We had to build up a precise system to control the ball for this. If the system is difficult for players to figure out, they won't feel completely satisfied, even if they end up controlling it well. In the same way, if the players fail to control the ball, they will also be dissatisfied with the result. How we could adjust our designs for the Wii was our big challenge. We finally came up with the present control system after going through a lot of testing and trial-and-error processes. In fact, we are still working on small adjustments of the swing speed to make the international version of the game even better.

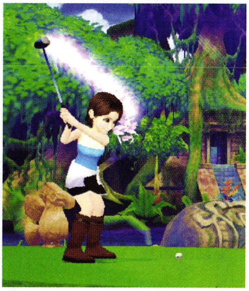
What can you tell us about the game's modes? What mode would you recommend for a fulfilling single-player experience?
We think that any multiplayer modes are suitable for parties, so please play with all your friends and family. Among the modes, we think that the new online mode is the most fun! Now you can play with a friend in your neighborhood as well as anyone in the world. When you beat another player, their character's face is added to your play sheet, so players will want to collect as many as possible.

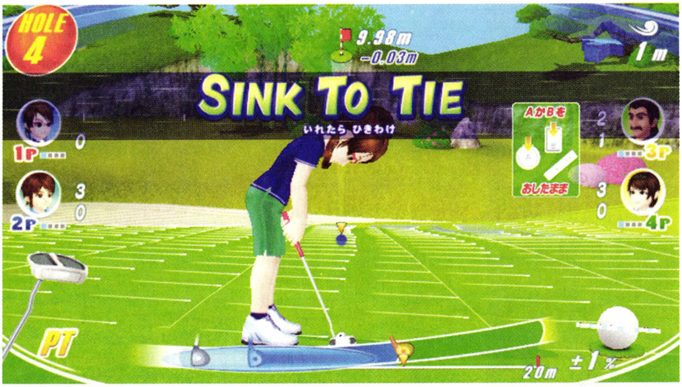
The main modes for the single-player mode are the tournament mode where players will open new courses, and the character match that allows players to obtain new characters, so you should try to complete them first. Don't be satisfied with simply completing a normal tournament and a normal character in each mode; let's win the tougher tournaments and defeat the stronger star characters! When you hit the wall and can't go forward, please try minigames such as Ring Shots and Target Golf for a switch and improve your skills!

Your games are always known for their minigames—what kind of minigames can we expect to see in We Love Golf!?
While there are various minigames to be included in the game, such as Ring Shot, Target Golf, and Near Pin Contest, I personally like Target Golf the best. It is fun to play, as you aim to get all of your shots closest to the pin. With this mode, you will learn important skills, such as



[Right] Minigames are a staple of Camelot's golf titles, and you can expect plenty of them here.





[Above] This should look familiar to fans of other Camelot golf games. [Right] Our only objection is that we don't see Phoenix Wright anywhere.

how to hit naturally or which club to choose for each situation. After you practice various shots over and over in order to hit the perfect shot, you will see your overall skills and scores improve.

How did you adapt Miis for the game? Is there any benefit to playing with Miis?
While your Mii is included as default for the multiplayer mode, you can only use a Mii after you defeat all the normal characters in the single-player mode. We worked on enhancing character graphics in order to share the same visual style between Miis and our We Love Golf! characters. Of course, it is fun to play using the original characters, but if you play with a Mii as your alter ego, you will have an emotional involvement, too. Additionally, when your Mii strikes a victory pose, it will change facial expressions, which will be fun for players to see.

What are the challenges of bringing the game online?
Even though the hardware is new to us, we were able to utilize our previous experiences creating mobile golf games as well as PC online games. We were very careful to implement new features, such as a user-friendly user interface, in order for those who have never played games online to easily go online and enjoy the game with a minimum of confusion.

Is there any other new content for the North American version of the game?
We are right in the middle of developing and debug testing for North American and European versions of We Love Golf! The major content newly added is the online gameplay, in addition to support for multiple languages in North America and Europe. Also, in addition to the new characters, we tweaked the graphics a little in order to appeal to international players. Furthermore, we're rethinking the swing speed as well.

Why do you think your golf games have become so successful while other companies' golf games haven't been as fortunate?
We believe that it is important in the development process to capture the essence of a game and transform it to make it truly fun. Camelot has been able to take the fun and speed of a sport and match that to the potential of a video game, which is one of the reasons why our games have so many fans.

How did you decide which special Capcom-themed outfits to include? Will there be any other Capcom cameos (themed courses, etc.)?
Since Camelot and Capcom are collaborating on this project, we wanted to show this collaboration not only in the game systems but also in the graphics. As a result, one of Camelot's art staff suggested adding Capcom-themed outfits. We really liked the idea, and we ran it past Capcom, who also liked it. Don't you think it's great for fans?! In fact, the artist that came up with the idea is a Capcom fan, and now that I'm thinking about it, he probably just wanted to create Capcom costumes for the characters he was making!

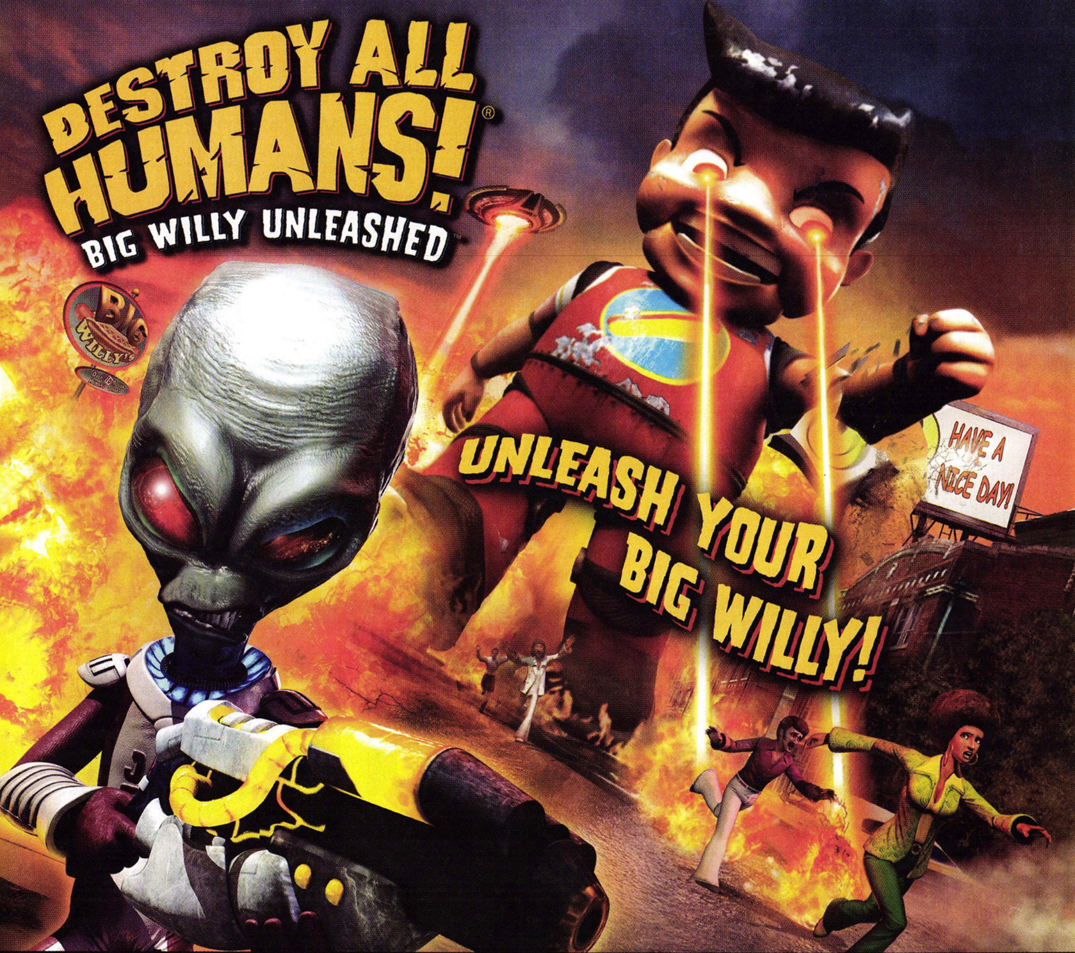
The talking Wii controller with arms is pretty awesome. Where did it come from, and does it have a name? Is it ticklish?
Thank you for the compliment. It is called Rimokon-kun in Japanese ("little remote control"). He was added to the game after much discussion about designing We Love Golf! to make it easy for new users to understand the analog-style game controls. The controller will tell you not only how to play, but also coach users on a variety of techniques. You are never going to feel lonely on the greens, even if you play all by yourself, as the controller will give you plenty of helpful advice.

This talkative controller may irritate you sometimes, so some players might want to turn it off once you learn the techniques. On the other hand, something good may happen after you clear his lesson, so you might want to listen up!

Additionally, when you use multiple controllers or when you play with the online multiplayer mode, the boos or cheers of the crowd will also come out of the Wii controller's speaker to give the game even more life.

The New Challengers

The North American version of We Love Golf! adds one thing other Wii golf games don't have: online play. You'll be able play against random opponents in one-on-one matches or face a to-be-determined number of friends (via Friend Codes) over six, nine, or 18 holes. And at press time, Capcom was running a poll on its blog site (blog.capcom.com) that asked fans which Capcom costumes they want to golf with. Resident Evil 4's Ashley Graham, Street Fighter (SF)'s Cammy, Darkstalkers' Morrigan, Mega Man's Roll Caskett, and Power Stone's Rouge were the choices for the female characters, with Morrigan leading. As for the male characters, fans could choose from SF's Balrog, Captain Commando's, er, Captain Commando, SF's Dhalsim, Dead Rising's Frank West, Final Fight's Guy, and SF's Ken, with Ken leading.



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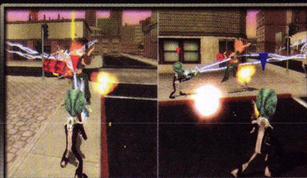

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BUILDING BETTER BRAWLS

Our combat-tested design tips will power up your custom stages in SUPER SMASH BROS. BRAWL.

BY CHRIS SLATE

As every Brawl fanatic here at Nintendo Power can attest, you're going to be hooked on the game's addictive new Stage Builder mode. Creating your own levels is a blast, and adds limitless play value to a title that already comes overstuffed with features.

Even quick, spontaneous level designs can be fun to play, but you'll soon find that while some stages catch on with friends and become a part of your group's regular rotation, others tire out fast. To help you zero in on what works and what doesn't, we've put together a list of tips that we've discovered during dozens of hours spent building, tweaking, and perfecting our favorite custom stages here at NP headquarters. We've even included a few of our favorite levels to illustrate how we've put our advice to good use. If you're up for it, we'd love for you to remake them, try them out, and send us ideas that you think would improve them (just pitch 'em to nintendopower@futureus.com).

Now, ready to build some battle-ready stages? Then let's get to work!

Stage Size

Since this is the first option presented to you when creating a level, we'll start here. When choosing how big to make your stage, there are a number of factors to consider. Do you want an offense-heavy bout with lots of KOs, or would you prefer a grind-it-out defensive battle where heavily damaged characters can stay in the fray? The bigger the stage, the more room characters will have to recover from being launched.

Also, consider which types of characters your stage will favor. A small space benefits slower, stronger characters that have trouble chasing down speedsters over large areas. Conversely, quicker characters thrive with room to hit and run, and distance to attack with projectiles.

Of course, if you begin your design with an idea of which parts you'd like to use and how to use them, you'll want to choose a big enough play field to support your plan. And if you enjoy fighting with certain rule changes in place, or with just two players instead of four, then you'll want to keep those things in mind right from the start.

Launch Areas

Deciding where players can launch each other off the stage is a key aspect of your design. A wide-open arena will encourage a large KO count, but a level with walls, ceilings, or other obstacles can keep battle-worn characters in play much longer, and will demand more cunning offensive strategies to score against an opponent.

DEATH MOUNTAIN

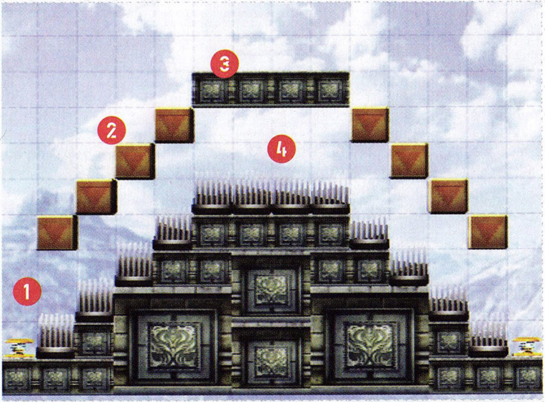
EXAMPLE 1

COMMENT: KING OF THE HILL

SIZE: MEDIUM

MUSIC: TARGET SMASH!! (SUPER SMASH BROS. BRAWL)

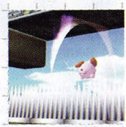
The design concept was simply "king of the hill." We wanted to create a situation where one small spot of land was highly valuable, and thus players would constantly fight over it. This stage suits strategies for both ground- and air-focused characters, and the level's intense yet silly premise is underscored perfectly by the *Target Smash!!* tune.



1 Players bold enough to risk combat on the sides might be able to score KOs with aerial attacks.

2 Launched players can recover by climbing these blocks back to safety, but they'll have to move fast before the blocks fall and trap them in the enclosed spike zone.

3 The peak of the mountain is so close to the top of the screen that characters can be launched upward for KOs at relatively low damage percentages.



4 Players trapped in the spike area can have a hard time getting out if the falling blocks are in place overhead. They may have to take a beating down the side of the mountain to reach one of the springs in the bottom corners.

MUSHROOM DOME

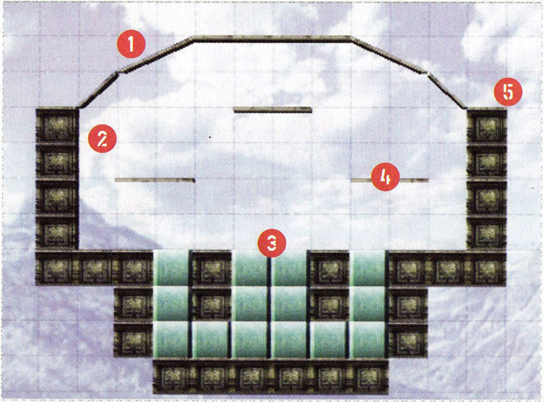
EXAMPLE 2

COMMENT: LAUNCH 'EM HIGH

SIZE: MEDIUM

MUSIC: AIRSHIP THEME (SUPER MARIO BROS. 3)

This familiar icon of the Mario games makes for a great, open area to brawl in. While very few pieces were used in its creation, the level can be approached in various ways and suits a wide range of character types.



1 The roof can be fought on in a pretty straightforward way, but it's dangerously close to the top of the screen. Heavily damaged characters are safer down below.

2 While the top of the stage—which uses a pass-through floor—is wide open, players are prevented from launching opponents off the sides of the screen.

3 The stop-and-go rotation of slippery ice blocks with normal bricks is a small touch, but can hurt players who forget they're sliding closer to an opponent.

4 The varying levels of pass-through floors provide ample opportunities for players to be attacked from above and below.

5 If a player can't reach these high edges, it's impossible to recover from a fall since there are no lower re-entry points.

Any parts of a stage that are built close to the top, bottom, or sides of the screen are especially dangerous, as anyone launched from those areas will have very little room to recover.

It's often fun to mix up safe places and danger zones within the same level. For example, a part of a stage could be mostly enclosed to prevent a player from being KO'd, while another area could be placed near a side of the screen with no barriers to bounce launched characters back into play. To make this work, however, you'll have to design the stage in a way to encourage players to risk leaving the safer spots on your map.

More on Floors, Walls, and Ceilings

Low ceilings—like in a tight tunnel—make for interesting areas because they encourage juggle combos. As opponents are struck and fly upwards, they bounce right back down into a follow-up attack.

You'll also want to carefully consider whether you use solid blocks or platforms that you can jump up and drop down through. A key point here is that a solid border, such as a floor, will block attacks, while characters like Link—with his Up+A jumping sword attack—would relish attacking from below through a pass-through floor. As a side note, keep in mind that while pass-through inclines won't stop hand-to-hand attacks, they will stop projectiles.

Long inclines such as stairways and ramps add a significant twist to combat because they put characters on an uneven level. This makes it difficult to grab an opponent for a throw, and favors characters with close attacks that have a wide vertical range. Solid inclines can also provide good angles for launching opponents off the stage.

Top Smash players will tell you that edge guarding—a strategy aimed at preventing launched characters from re-entering the battle area—is a big part of advanced Smash play. You can add a devious twist to this aspect of the game by placing pieces at the ends of your floor—like ice blocks or ramps—that won't let tossed characters grab onto them.

Controlling Spawn Points

This is a short tip, but an important one. Many times you'll find that a design doesn't work because the game spawns characters in places that don't mesh with your idea. Since the game usually places characters on the highest parts of a stage, you can often overcome your problem by placing spikes on top of any high surfaces that you don't want characters appearing on. For example, placing spikes along the top of a box-shaped level would cause characters to spawn inside of the box instead of on top of it.

Also keep in mind that your stage will need to adequately allow characters to re-enter the combat zone after falling; they always reappear at the top center of the screen.

Custom and Feature Parts

Here at NP we don't often find good uses for Custom parts. While they look cool, they eat up a lot of surrounding space, which makes fitting them in hard. They're best used sparingly, if at all.

On the other hand, Feature parts such as springs, spikes, and moving platforms add extra functionality that can be very important to creating fun and unique levels. However, you have to manage the temptation to go wild with these pieces. While an area full of nothing but ladders and dropping blocks can be good for a laugh at first, you'll find that gimmick stages tend to get old fast. With these parts, a little goes a long way.

Name, Comment, and Music

These design decisions won't really affect how fun a stage is, but remember that your friends—and possibly other players around the world—will play your level, too. It's a good idea to match your music selection to the tone or intensity of the action in your stage. When choosing a name and writing a comment, try to hint at the way you'd suggest that a player approach the level, or possibly offer a warning about some aspect of your stage.

Final Tips

It's often helpful to "sketch" out your idea with smaller blocks and pieces, then look for ways to replace groups of similar parts with a single larger one of the same type. This will often help you maximize the number of parts available for you to use.

When play-testing your level, be sure to see how different types of characters fare. Will short-jumping characters get stuck in certain areas, or will high-leaping ones reach areas they're not supposed to? Also watch for spots where characters can become unfairly trapped, possibly prevented from returning to safety or even from being knocked out.

Ultimately, there are no hard wrong or right rules when creating a custom stage, so don't be afraid to experiment liberally and try to get as much feedback as possible from friends. Becoming a pro stage designer will land you a special spot within your circle of Smash players, and—who knows?—could one day even lead to a promising career as a video game level designer. Give it your best!

THUNDERDOME

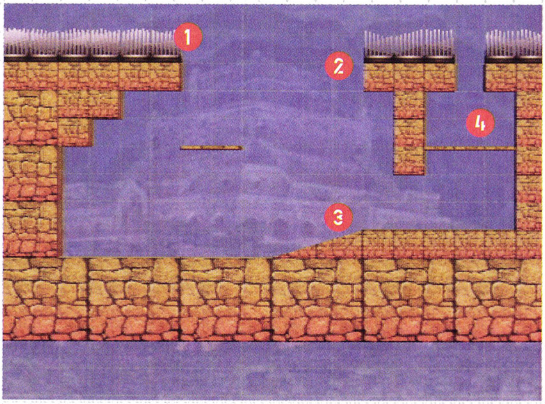
EXAMPLE 3

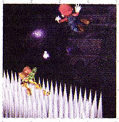
COMMENT: ONE MAN LEAVES

SIZE: LARGE

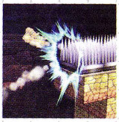
MUSIC: MGS4~THEME OF LOVE~SMASH BROS. BRAWL VERSION

Thunderdome was originally inspired by—and designed to replicate—the titular dome-shaped battle arena from the cinematic masterpiece *Mad Max: Beyond Thunderdome*. After we'd tweaked the stage to our satisfaction, however, it didn't end up resembling a dome at all. Oh, well. It still achieved our design goal of fierce, high-damage combat.

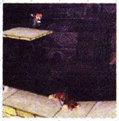




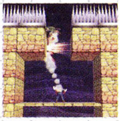
1 Spikes were placed along the top to ensure that characters would duke it out within the confines of Thunderdome.



2 The thoroughly enclosed space makes for long battles that take a heavy toll on combatants. Side launches are impossible, so characters must be knocked skyward.



3 This change in elevation is a subtle addition, but prevents projectile attacks from reaching across the entire stage.



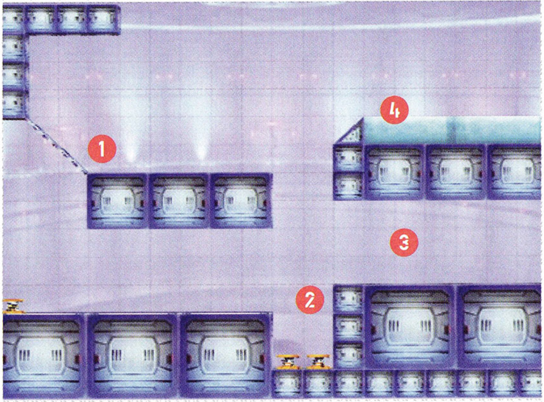
4 Fighting in this area, "The Attic," is as intense as combat gets, with only one small opening to knock or throw an opponent through. Clever players might work over a foe here then lure them out into the main area, or wounded players might hide out here.

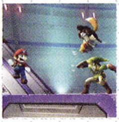
RADD STATION

EXAMPLE 4

COMMENT: HIT & RUN
SIZE: LARGE
MUSIC: SPACE ARMADA (STAR FOX)

The design theme for this stage was "hallways." We'd originally tried several narrow, branching tunnels—some of which met dead ends—but it was way too difficult to land a KO. Our final version does a better job of balancing tight, confined areas with plenty of launch opportunities.





1 Since this platform offers the most unrestricted space for combat, we placed a barrier in the corner to make it harder to launch an opponent from here so that players wouldn't spend all their time in this area.

2 This center passageway encourages aerial attacks as players bounce on the springs or pass from one side of the stage to the other.

3 These tight corridors encourage side attacks to launch opponents, and a lot of damage can be dealt by juggling someone off the ceiling and into a combo.

4 Because characters can be knocked in any direction from this platform, we covered it in ice to make the rest of the stage more desirable in comparison. The edge of the ice floor can't be grabbed on re-entry, either.

TIPS FROM THE PROS

The Path to Becoming a Smash Champ

NATE BIHLDORFF
Localization Producer/Manager, Nintendo of America

OK, first, a disclaimer—there is no one correct way to play Brawl. This game is about putting a smile on your face first and foremost, and if playing Super Sudden Death in the Temple with Motion-Sensor Bombs set to high is your cup of tea, then more power to you. Conversely, if you can't imagine doing anything but one-on-one itemless matches on Final Destination, then go to it. I've seen incredibly high-level play manifest itself in every mode of this game, and as long as you're having fun, you're playing it right.

That said, for my dollar, it doesn't get any better than four-player matches with all items on. For me, Smash has always been a game of constant improvisation—of taking what the environment gives you and constantly making split-second decisions you've never made before. My most satisfying KOs are not ones where I string together a 12-hit combo that I memorized in Training mode—they're the ones where I do ridiculous things I'll probably never see again. Just yesterday I planted a Pitfall just as a Party Ball opened and dropped four Bob-ombs. I managed to grab Link and throw him upward, then I bounced off a Spring and dunked him onto the Pitfall, which embedded him in the ground...just as the troop of Bob-ombs lit their own fuses, wandered casually over, and blew him into the stratosphere. Those spur-of-the-moment strategies, combined with the skill to bring them to fruition, is the heart and soul of the game for me.

Those technical skills are essential, of course—there's nothing worse than seeing what *could* be a brilliant string and lacking the [Continued on pg. 74]

STAIRS OF DOOM

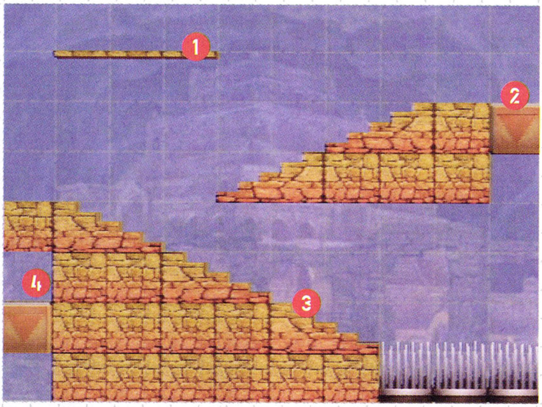
EXAMPLE 5

COMMENT: BE A STAIR MASTER!

SIZE: SMALL

MUSIC: FIRE EMBLEM THEME (FIRE EMBLEM)

Once we discovered how dramatically fighting on an incline affects both offense and defense, we had to take it to the extreme. Characters with great throws are at a disadvantage here, as it's rarely possible to fight on even ground.



1 This small platform is the only "normal" fighting space around, and can provide a place for characters to retreat to when the stair battle gets too fierce.

2 If this falling block is in place, a launched character won't be able to grab its ledge and may have to settle for a spiky return to the battlefield below.

3 Players with wide-hitting side and up attacks will fare better on the stairs, while others may choose to take advantage of the stage's plentiful airspace.

4 Characters that fall short of grabbing the above ledge can try to squeeze in here, but they have to move fast with precise jumps to stay in play.

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TRIFORCE

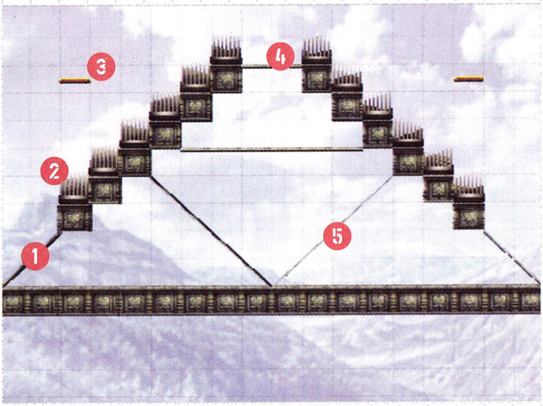
EXAMPLE 6

COMMENT: USE THE WALLS

SIZE: LARGE

MUSIC: MAIN THEME (THE LEGEND OF ZELDA)

The inspiration here was obviously, "Would the Triforce symbol make for a good fighting arena?" It actually does work well, but it took a while to find just the right approach. This is a good example of a large stage that doesn't incorporate a ton of part types, but finds just the right uses for the ones it has.



1 These pass-through walls were solid originally, but testing found that the level needed more places to launch characters than at just the top.

2 Spikes were used to keep characters from spawning on the outside, and also to provide an interesting hazard for players who venture beyond the center battle area.

3 Moving platforms were placed to give wayward characters a chance to avoid tons of spike damage.

4 The top opening is a high-risk spot due to its extremely close proximity to the top of the screen—heavily damaged characters can easily be grabbed and thrown off the top. This opening is also placed directly where fallen characters re-spawn.

5 While characters can move freely through these diagonal walls, many projectiles can't, which adds an interesting twist that clever defenders can use to their advantage.

TIPS FROM THE PROS...CONTINUED

ability to pull it off. First and foremost, you have to know your character. No, actually, scratch that—you have to know *all* the characters. Truly understanding your enemy begins with fighting a mile in his or her shoes, and the better you are with all the characters, the more deeply you'll understand their weaknesses. If you play enough with everyone, you'll know attack patterns, move speeds, and most importantly, hit priority. How you stack up in every situation—in midair, on level ground, on high ground, on low ground—is crucial, and knowing that your up midair attack will trump their down midair attack could be the difference between a successful juggle and an embarrassing KO. Knowing all your moves and utilizing them all is also vital because the game does not reward stale moves—if you use the same move too many times, it does less damage and knockback, so it behooves you to vary it as much as possible.

There are also little things that you should master. Ukemi, for one—this is named for a judo move where you absorb the momentum of an enemy's attack by falling correctly. In Smash, this means simply pressing a shield button at the exact moment you hit the ground, ceiling, or wall. Instead of bouncing wildly around, you cancel all momentum and spring off the surface, ready to fight. You need to master air dodging, too—while you're much more at the mercy of gravity than you were in Melee, you can air-dodge many times in a row, so use your frames of invincibility to maximum effect while recovering or while avoiding Final Smashes. You're not just invincible while air- or ground-dodging, either—you get many frames of invincibility while grabbing and climbing an edge, or getting up from lying prone. Master the timing of these, and not only will you break up people's attacks with invincible priority, but you'll even be able to survive dire situations, like a Gooey Bomb on your face.

I'd definitely recommend reading through the Dojo (www.smashbros.com) simply because Sakurai-san has basically set it up as a massive manual for the game, so you can learn a lot about the intricacies of each character there. Beyond that, just play, play, play. And dunk people whenever possible.

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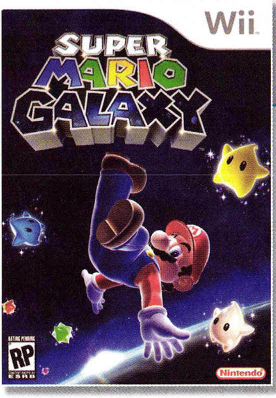
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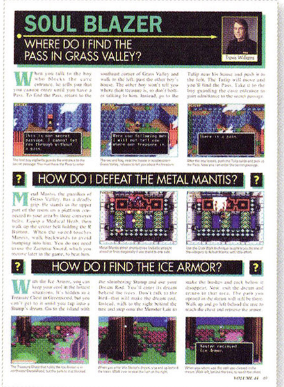
Strategic Thinking

UNTIL A FEW YEARS AGO, most issues of Nintendo Power contained pages packed with detailed maps, extensive walkthroughs, item lists, boss-beating strategies, cheats, tricks, and codes. In fact, most issues had more strategy coverage than all other types of stories combined. Today, with gameplay information little more than a mouse click away on the Internet, it no longer makes sense for NP to focus on strategy, but there was a time when the video game landscape was quite different, and Nintendo Power's strategy coverage was itself a strategic gamble to help rebuild an industry.

Minoru Arakawa, Nintendo of America's founder and its first president, knew that there was a fundamental difference between early game consoles and what Nintendo was bringing to the market after Atari's collapse in the early 1980s. NES games boasted challenge, depth, and graphics undreamed of in the first wave of home consoles. He also understood that more-challenging games required a greater commitment from players in order to experience their depths and fully appreciate them. Imagine someone buying a Porsche but never taking it out of first gear. That driver would probably wonder what all the hype was about. The trick was to get players so involved with the games that they'd want to play them through to the end. From the success of game-counselor phone lines and the *Nintendo Fun Club News* newsletter, Mr. Arakawa learned that a certain amount of hand-holding could get players to that level of comfort and satisfaction. Keep in mind that video game culture was in its infancy—the many gaming conventions we take for granted today were unknown in the mid '80s—and gamers were pretty much on their own, except for what they learned from friends. And so the idea was hatched to publish a magazine that would give players the strategic help to immerse them in the games. Mr. Arakawa's vision paid huge dividends as gaming and Nintendo grew like never before. Now let's look back at some of the many ways Nintendo Power brought home its strategies. **BY SCOTT PELLAND**



SOUL BLAZER

WHERE DO I FIND THE PASS IN GRASS VALLEY?

HOW DO I DEFEAT THE METAL MANTIS?

HOW DO I FIND THE ICE ARMOR?

Counselor's Corner

VOL. 44 • DEC 1992 • PG 49

This long-running column spotlighted strategies for overcoming trouble spots in games. We also highlighted the Game Counselors, but the tips usually came from NP's crew, many of which, incidentally, started out as Game Counselors. Travis Williams, better known to Nintendo's early online audiences as NOA Travis, was one of many Game Counselors who assisted Nintendo's magazine and Internet efforts.

W·I·L·L·O·W

CHARACTERS

HERE BEGINS A DETAILED GUIDE ON WILLOW'S QUEST TO DEFEAT BAVMORDA

NELWYN

WHO IS THE DEMON BOGARDA? DISCOVER HIS SECRET, WILLOW!

Village of Dew—Western Forest

ITEMS

Strategy Articles

NOV/DEC 1989 • PGS 8-9

To meet its goal of publishing game information that was easy to understand, inviting, and fun, Nintendo teamed up with a production company known as Workhouse (later renamed V-Design), which had produced gaming magazines in Japan. Led by veteran designer Yoshi Orimo, Workhouse set up shop with a crew of Japanese designers and game experts that worked in concert with Nintendo's editorial staff. As for the amount of strategy content, consider NP's November/December 1989 issue, which included 46 pages of strategy articles (Willow, RC Pro-Am, Tetris, Ironsword, Robocop, and NES Play Action Football) plus a 36-page strategy special covering Dragon Warrior and a double fold-out map of Willow. It makes my thumbs sore just contemplating it.

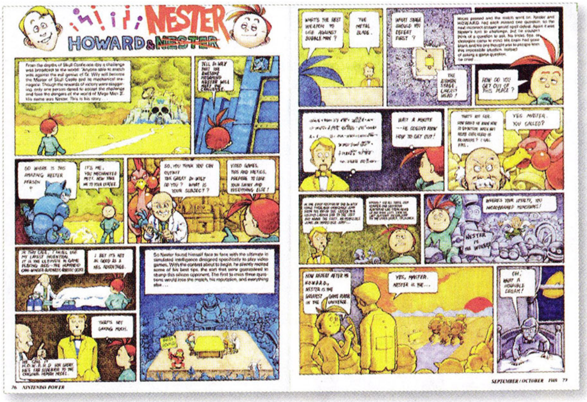
OF NINTENDO POWER

#4 IN OUR YEARLONG CELEBRATION OF NINTENDO POWER'S CLASSIC MOMENTS

Howard & Nester

SEPT/OCT 1989 • PGS. 76-77

Even the lighthearted Howard & Nester comic (which became Nester's Adventures when Howard Philips left Nintendo) contained a game tip. Why go to all that trouble? As the author of the Nester comics, I often dreaded having to work the tip into the story, but we were in the game tip business. Just as Howard discovers in the September/October 1989 issue's episode featuring Mega Man II, mixing game tips with Nester's ego could be a nightmare.



EPIC TACTICS

Golden Sun

WORLD MAP

THE DJINNI LOCATOR

Epic Center

VOL. 153 • FEB. 2002 • PG 117

Devoted to RPGs, strategy games, and simulations, the Epic Center column often featured detailed strategies. NP staff writer Alan Averill (famously appearing in NP's pages as a blue slime) explored these titles in extraordinary depth, such as the nine-page Djinni Locator in Vol. 153 that uncovered the location of Golden Sun's 28 cleverly hidden Djinn.

CLASSIFIED INFORMATION

NINTENDO TOP SECRET POWER

VICE

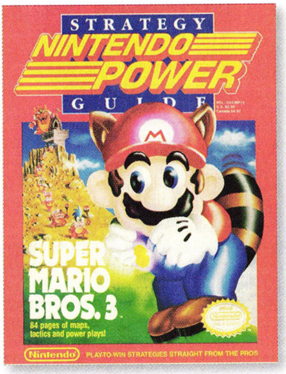
Stage Select

Character Change

Classified Information

VOL. 29 • OCT 1991 • PG 20

Cheats and codes aren't technically strategies, but they may be said to constitute gameplay help, and NP's Classified Information column was a perennial reader favorite. In NP's early years, readers were encouraged to submit cheats along with a three digit agent number. The ugly truth (it had to come out sooner or later) is that we received the lion's share of codes directly from publishers and developers, so most of those agent numbers were bogus. Of course, that makes the real agent submissions that much more impressive. Kudos Agent #453! Or was that Agent #534...?



STRATEGY

NINTENDO POWER

GUIDE

SUPER MARIO BROS. 3

84 pages of maps, tactics and power plays!

Nintendo PLAY-TO-WIN STRATEGIES STRAIGHT FROM THE PROS

Strategy Guides

VOL. 13 • 1989

So important was strategic coverage of key titles that for a short time every other issue subscribers received was not Nintendo Power, but a Nintendo Power Strategy Guide. For instance, Vol. 13 was devoted to Super Mario Bros. 3, hand-holding players through all eight worlds right up to the game-ending boss battle with Bowser, where we politely bowed out to avoid spoiling readers' final moment of glory.

NINTENDO POWER SWEEPSTAKES
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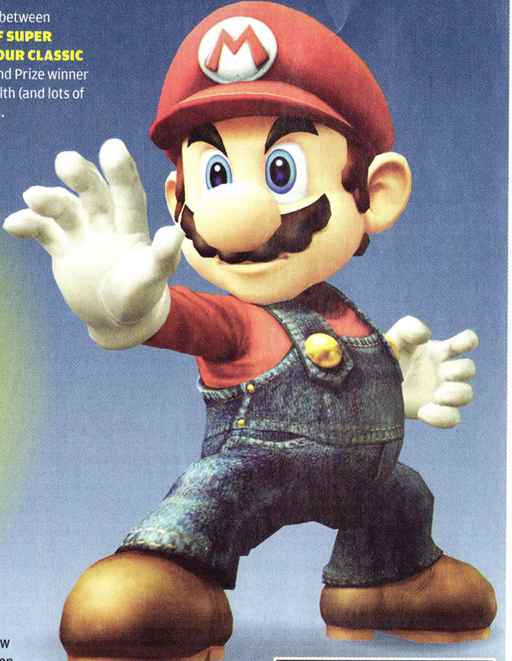
Super Smash Bros. Brawl
Wii



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4. It is not necessary to buy Nintendo Power magazine to become a contestant. Everyone who mails in an entry will be considered as participants.

5. Entrants must be at least 13 years of age. If a winner is a minor, the prize will be awarded in the name of winner's parent or legal guardian, who is solely responsible for all applicable federal, state and local taxes, and that winner must also provide a signed parental or guardian consent form, provided by the sponsor, within 7 days of notification attempt. Failure of the minor to return the guardian consent form will result in the forfeiture of the prize and selection of an alternate winner, who will be chosen through a random drawing from the remaining eligible entries.

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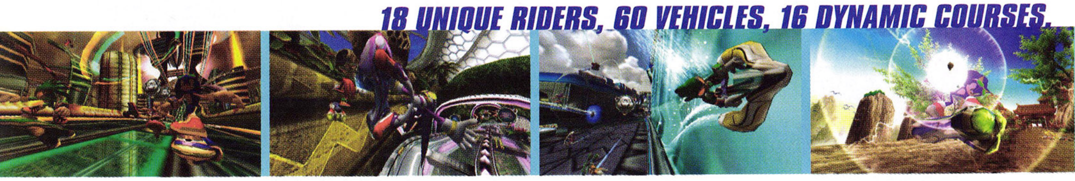

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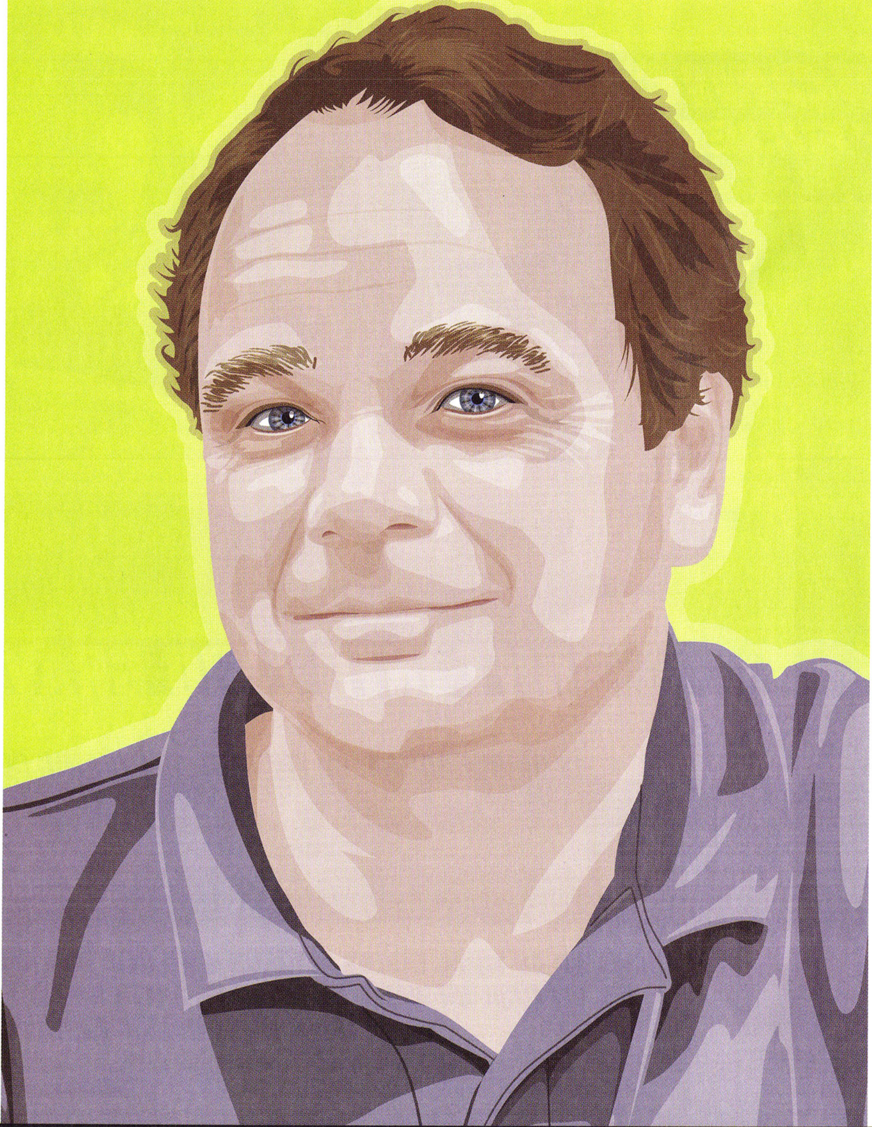


12

Power Profiles

Sid Meier

ILLUSTRATION BY CHRISTINA EMPEDOCLES

With more than 25 years of experience under his belt, Sid Meier is one of the video game industry's true pioneers. He's responsible for some of the most influential PC games of all time—most notably the Civilization series—and was the second-ever inductee into the Academy of Interactive Arts and Sciences' Hall of Fame. He'll bring his considerable development talents to the DS this spring with Civilization Revolution.

NINTENDO POWER: Can you tell us how you got into the video game business?

SID MEIER: It was kind of on a dare actually. In the late 1970s, Bill Stealey and I were working together at a company in Maryland, and while attending a business conference, we decided to play a flight-sim arcade game during one of the breaks. Bill was really impressed that I kept winning, and I told him that I could tell what the AI was going to do each time, so it was easy to win...and I said that I could make a better game in two weeks. Bill challenged me to do just that, and so began our game development company. We started Microprose Software in 1980.

When you were a kid, what did you want to be when you grew up?

As a kid I really enjoyed playing board games and card games, and was interested in reading books about history, pirates, airplanes...all of which have been topics of the games I've created. I guess I thought it would be great to make games for a living, but I never really thought that was a possibility. I caught the computer bug in college and my two passions seemed to just flow together and I've had my dream job ever since.

How has the video game industry changed during the time that you've been involved with it, both from a creative standpoint and a business standpoint?

It has definitely changed from a business standpoint. Games are much more expensive to make now than when I started in the early 1980s. Back then we could make a game in our garage with 3 people. Now it takes a big office, a team of 30-50 people, and lots of money to make a great game. There is also far more competition with so many different gaming platforms and a constant influx of new games for players to choose. Creatively, we're still faced with the same fun challenges we had in the past—to make a really cool and engaging game experience for the targeted platform. We've had a great time working on our first DS game; the platform is a natural fit for Civilization Revolution.

What aspect of creating a video game do you enjoy the most?

In the beginning of the development cycle, I enjoy creating the prototype for the game that will act as the guide for the team throughout production. Once we're into full production, I like being hands-on [with] designing and programming. Writing code for games is what keeps me coming into the office every day.

> *"I make games based on topics that interest me, and fortunately I haven't run out of interesting topics."*

Where did the idea for Civilization originally come from?

As I mentioned, most of the topics for my games have come from things I liked as a kid. I enjoyed reading and playing games about history, and once I got into making computer games, I thought it would be the perfect topic to bring to life on the screen. History has mass appeal and there are endless topics to incorporate into a game, so it keeps things interesting. And the goal of Civilization is pretty compelling...lead your chosen nation from the stone age to the space age and become the greatest ruler the world has ever known. Who doesn't want to do that?

What is it about tactical simulations that appeals to you personally?

I like games that put me in control and challenge me to think, strategize, and make important decisions as I play.

With Civilization Revolution, you're moving away from PC development in favor of dedicated gaming platforms. What was the impetus behind that transition, and have you had to approach development differently?

We're not moving away from PC development; we just decided it was time to create a Civilization experience for all of the other great gaming platforms that are available now. The latest generation of consoles are far more powerful than earlier versions

DATE OF BIRTH:
February 24, 1954

BIRTHPLACE:
Sarnia, Canada

POSITION:
Director of Creative Development at Firaxis

BEST KNOWN FOR:
Creating Civilization; causing millions of gamers to suffer sleep deprivation

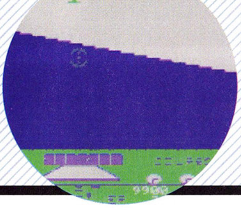
FAVORITE FOOD:
Nachos

CURRENT PROJECTS:
Civilization Revolution

GAMEOGRAPHY

Though Meier has focused primarily on tactical simulations throughout his career, the subject matter for his games has been extremely varied, ranging from pirates to outer space to railroads.

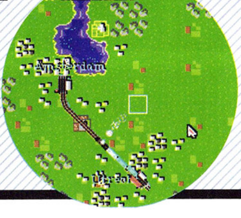
SPITFIRE ACE
1982, ATARI 400/800
DESIGNER/PROGRAMMER

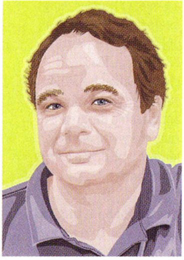


SID MEIER'S PIRATES!
1987, PC
DESIGNER/PROGRAMMER

GUARD
43 MEN
ANGRY
YEARMA
46 M
FIRM

RAILROAD TYCOON
1990, PC
DESIGNER





and can finally deliver a game like Civ in a fun and engaging way. And the DS is a dream come true for Civ fans around the world. What could be better than taking the world's most addictive strategy game with you wherever you go?

Developing on three new platforms simultaneously has been a huge challenge for all of us at Firaxis. But we've learned a tremendous amount and are well poised to create fun games for all of these great platforms moving forward.

You've made both real-time and turn-based strategy games. What do you feel are the advantages of each, and why do you think developers tend to shy away from turn-based systems these days?
The game really dictates the genre, and Civ only works as a turn-based game. In a game as deep and epic as Civ, players need time to think and strategize—after all, it's not easy to conquer the world! There are so many ways to play and decisions to make, and players like to be able to control the pace of the game rather than having the game push them along.

Real-time strategy is much more action-oriented and fits really well with certain types of games. You spend time reacting to things that come at you, which makes for an exciting game experience.

I really don't know why other developers would shy away from turn-based games. Maybe they just don't have a game design suited for the genre.

We assume you're a bit of a history buff. Which period of history do you find most intriguing?
I really love the Civil War. As a kid, I liked reading about it and playing card games and board games about the war. And then when we started Firaxis in 1996, I was able to make a computer game about one of the most famous Civil War battles—Gettysburg.

You've been in game development for more than 20 years. How do you maintain your creative zeal?
I make games based on topics that interest me, and fortunately I haven't run out of interesting topics. Since I like the subject of my games, whether it be pirates, railroads, airplanes, history, golf, etc., the creativity seems to just flow. I'm hoping to make games forever because there are still so many great topics left to cover.

Is there a type of game that you haven't made before that you'd particularly like to try your hand at some day?
I'm very interested in MMOs, and would like to think about making one some day. I don't have any concrete plans for it, but a guy can dream a little.

In general, video game developers don't seem to get the recognition of their counterparts in other mediums. Why do you think that is, and what needs to be done to change that?
I think as video gaming grows to be a larger part of mainstream entertainment, we'll become more familiar with the folks who make them. Our industry is still very young...we just need to give it time.

When you're stumped by an especially difficult problem while creating a game, what's your process for working through it?
We have a great team of developers at Firaxis, so when we come up against a tough problem we work through it together. Much of what we do is about teamwork and problem solving, and fortunately we have people with the dedication and talent to overcome the many challenges that hit us on a daily basis.

What other games or game creators do you most admire or respect?
Some of the game designers who have inspired me over the years are Dani Bunten, creator of The Seven Cities of Gold—the first open-ended adventure game; Will Wright—SimCity was the first "god game" and it set the stage for Civilization; and Bruce Shelley, one of my early design partners at Microprose who went on to found Ensemble Studios and create the Age of Empires series—arguably the greatest RTS ever made.

Whose works in other forms of media, such as film or literature, do you most admire or enjoy?
I'm a musician in my spare time and really enjoy the work of Bach. In literature I'd have to say my favorite authors are Richard Rhodes (*The Making of the Atomic Bomb*) and the nonfiction work of Paul Theroux.

What are some of your favorite nongaming hobbies or pastimes?
When I'm not making games, I love playing them. My 17-year-old son Ryan and I play all kinds of games on all of the different platforms. I also enjoy playing music. I sing and play guitar and keyboard in a band at our church. When the weather's nice I like to play golf, my newest hobby.

> *"I'm hoping to make games forever because there are still so many great topics left to cover."*

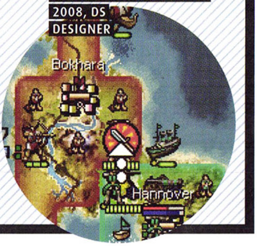
What would you like to be remembered for 50 years from now?
I'd like to be remembered as the guy who never stopped making fun games. Oh, and as "The Creator of Civilization."

If you could have one superpower, what would it be and why?
I'd like to have the power to slow down the passage of time so I could make more games.

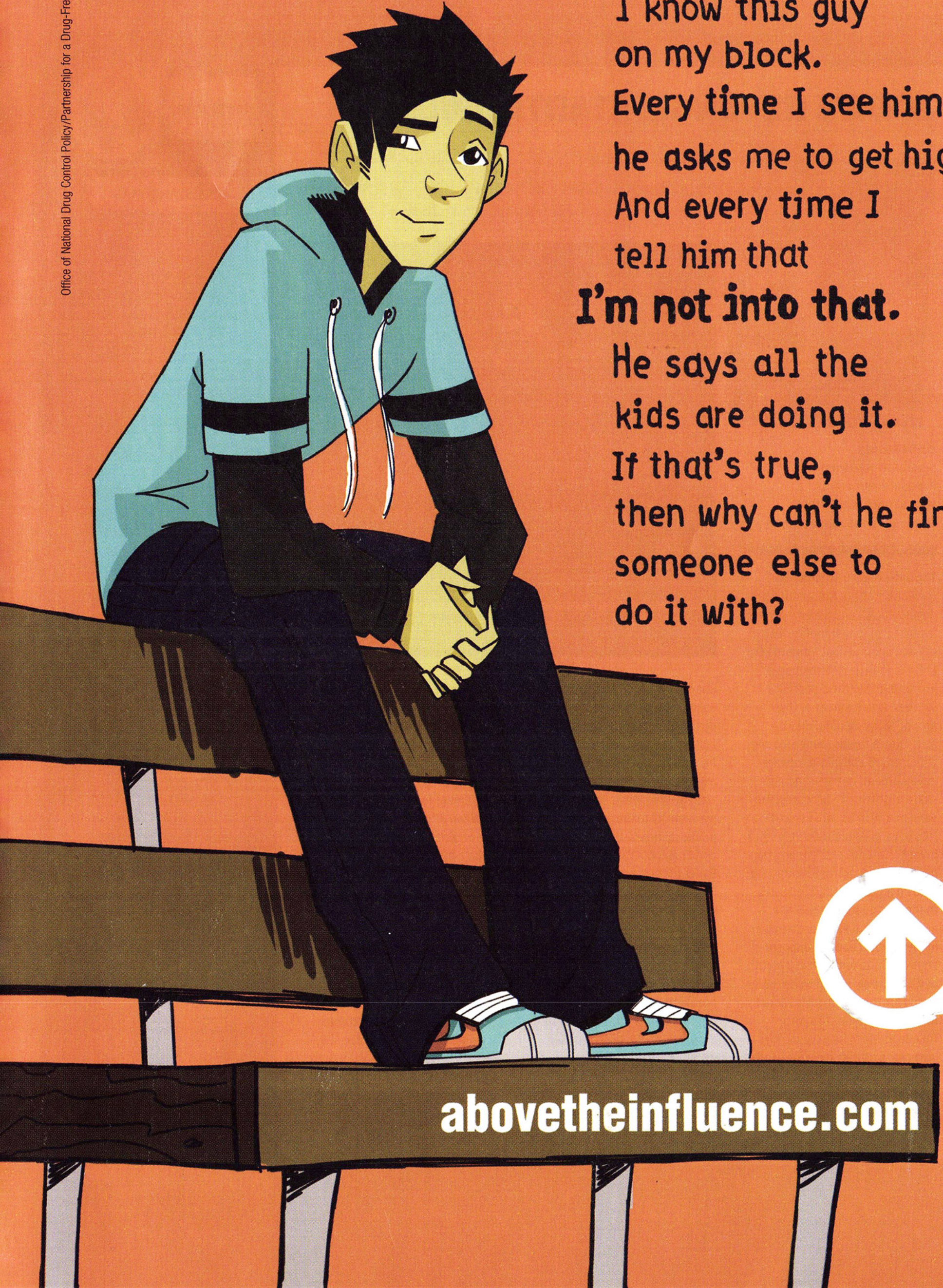
SID MEIER'S CIVILIZATION
1991, PC
DESIGNER

SID MEIER'S GETTYSBURG!
1997, PC
DESIGNER

SID MEIER'S ALPHA CENTAURI
1999, PC
DESIGNER
SPARTA COMMAND


CIVILIZATION REVOLUTION
2008, DS
DESIGNER

Office of National Drug Control Policy/Partnership for a Drug-Free America®



I know this guy
on my block.
Every time I see him
he asks me to get high.
And every time I
tell him that
I'm not into that.
He says all the
kids are doing it.
If that's true,
then why can't he find
someone else to
do it with?

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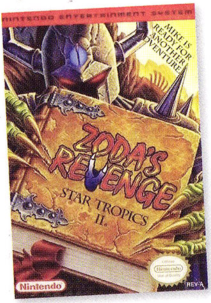
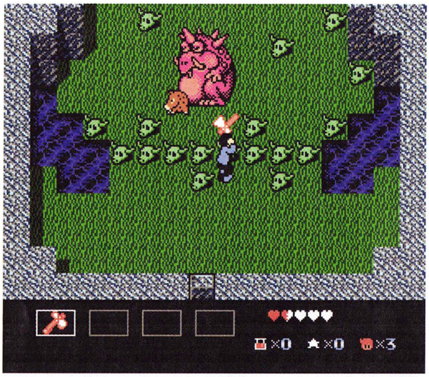
ZODA'S REVENGE: STARTROPICS II


NINTENDO ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEM
MIKE IS READY FOR ANOTHER ADVENTURE!
ZODA'S REVENGE
STAR TROPICS II
Nintendo

The last adventure for the NES showcases one of Nintendo's brightest hardware-and-software-developing talents.



Zoda's Revenge was a great action-adventure title for its day—it's just a shame that it was released when the NES was on its way out.

PLATFORM: NES
DEVELOPER: NINTENDO
PUBLISHER: NINTENDO
RELEASE DATE: MARCH 1994
COVERED IN ISSUES: 56, 57, 58, 61

Though Shigeru Miyamoto is the public face of Nintendo game development (and deservedly so), a handful of longstanding designers and engineers at Nintendo Co. Ltd. in Japan have contributed just as much to the company's success. One member of that group, Genyo Takeda, may be best known for his numerous contributions to console-hardware development, but he's had his share of software successes, too—particularly in the arcade and NES days. His Punch-Out!! is still a favorite among retro gaming fans, and the NES StarTropics titles are mini adventure-gaming classics that never quite got their due.

As a writer for Nintendo Power in the 1990s, I had the opportunity to help Takeda's R&D 3 team develop the story and write the dialog for the StarTropics sequel. After a few phone calls with Takeda in which he gave me his ideas for a time-travel story and the use of the seven Tetris block shapes (Tetrads) as treasures, I left for Kyoto for two weeks to work directly with his team. Enamored with Western culture, Takeda wanted to select time periods and figures from fiction and history for the game that would be familiar to a North American audience. His first suggestion was the Wild West. From there, we spun off to the caveman era, medieval times, the Renaissance, and England's Victorian period. Eager to research Sherlock Holmes (who appears in the game) while in Japan, I bought a collection of the detective's adventures that were simplified for first-time English readers (the only English Holmes books that I could find): sort of a "see spot run" version of *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. While not putting words in the mouths of game characters, I looked over the shoulders of the team members—map builders, programmers, and artists—as they developed puzzles and enemy encounters for the Zelda-style adventure. With lessons learned from development of the first game, the team sought to improve gameplay, particularly in the area of offering diagonal movement for the character.

When it became apparent that the original title was not going to be a big hit, the sequel was completed but its release was delayed. It was eventually put into the market in 1994 (well into the reign of the Super NES) as one of the company's last NES titles (along with Wario's Woods). The subtitle, Zoda's Revenge, was promoted to the main title because it was not clear that StarTropics II would be much of a draw. Still, those who did play the game were treated to a quirky title with lots of humor and action—everything that players enjoy from gaming's golden age. —GEORGE S.

Be like Mike.

RENAISSANCE MAN

He may not be at the level of Leonardo da Vinci (one of the characters in Zoda's Revenge), but Genyo Takeda has invented quite a few things that made an impact in the video game world.

PUNCH-OUT!!
My wife knows little about video games, but after my boxing class she always asks if I've learned the "Mighty Blow" from Takeda's most popular game.

BATTERY BACKUP
First used in The Legend of Zelda, a battery built into the Game Pak allowed players to save their game.

STARTROPICS
The first title starring Mike Jones (a tip of the fedora to Indiana Jones) was also one of Nintendo's first action-adventures with a strong storyline (more than "save the princess") and a watershed moment in the collaboration between Nintendo's Kyoto office and Nintendo of America.

HAVE A FAVORITE CLASSIC GAME YOU'D LIKE TO SEE REVISITED?
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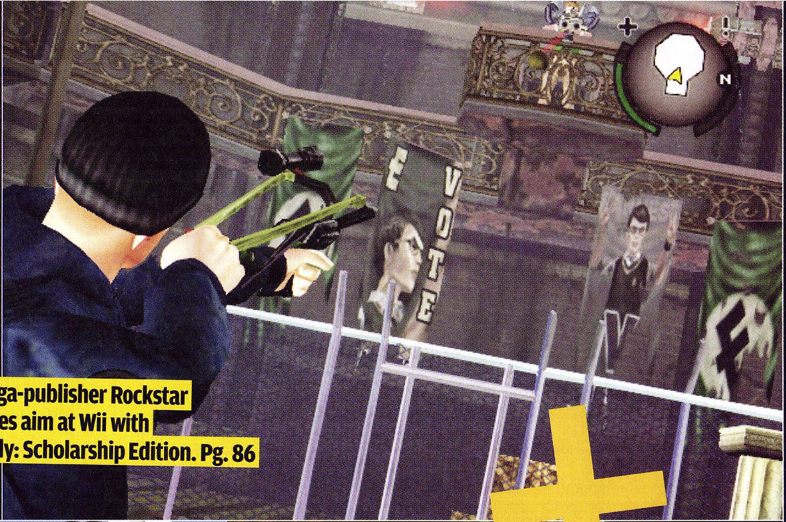
REVIEWS

IN-DEPTH REVIEWS OF ALL THE LATEST GAMES



Mega-publisher Rockstar takes aim at Wii with Bully: Scholarship Edition. Pg. 86

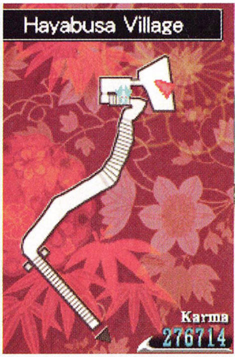
+ Baroque, MLB 2K8, Opoona, Lost in Blue 3, Worms: A Space Oddity, and more.

85
Sega's superstars play tennis in the aptly titled Sega Superstars Tennis.

84
Ninja Gaiden: Dragon Sword swears vengeance against all lesser action games.

87
Zombies (and worse) are on the loose in The House of the Dead 2&3 Return.

88
Big Willy's on the rampage in Destroy All Humans! Big Willy Unleashed.



WAY OF THE STYLUS

Action Re-Forged

NINJA GAIDEN: DRAGON SWORD

RATING: **8.5**
PLATFORM: **DS**
PUBLISHER: **TECMO**
DEVELOPER: **TEAM NINJA**
ESRB: **TEEN**

The DS has seen more than its share of trail-blazing, innovative software, but Ninja Gaiden: Dragon Sword may be the most impressive achievement on the handheld to date. Team Ninja has accomplished what previously seemed impossible, creating an action game controlled entirely via the stylus that's actually...fun. Really, really fun.

Set six months after the events of Ninja Gaiden for Xbox, Dragon Sword marks the return of legendary ninja Ryu Hayabusa. The story begins with the Hayabusa clan enjoying the peaceful tranquility of its newly rebuilt village, but as is wont to happen, a new threat emerges and forces Ryu into battle once more. Players hold the DS sideways, book-style, and control all of the ninja's actions using the touch screen (with the lone exception of blocking, which is performed by pressing any button). Given that, one might reasonably expect the action to be watered down or feel stilted. But Team Ninja has done a masterful job of translating the franchise's robust combat to the new interface. With a little bit of practice, you'll be dashing around the screen, hurling shuriken, and cutting through any evildoer foolish enough to stand in your path. Dragon Sword's action is every bit as slick and stylish as its console counterpart, and gives you that same sensation of feeling like a total badass. It's both comfortingly familiar and unlike anything you've played before; a traditional gaming experience made fresh by the DS.

Dragon Sword's presentation is equally remarkable. The pre-rendered backdrops are absolutely gorgeous, painting scenes of astonishing depth and detail for a DS game, whether it's the lush foliage and gently flowing stream of a secluded forest or the crumbling ruins of an ancient temple. The environment goes fully polygonal during boss battles, allowing the camera to zoom in behind Ryu and showcasing some of the most amazing 3-D ever squeezed from the handheld. Likewise, the sound quality is top-notch, making the most of a subdued soundtrack and ambient audio effects. This is the rare third-party game that seems to tap into the hardware as effectively as Nintendo's first-party efforts. Beautifully illustrated comic-book-style cut-scenes tie everything together, and while the overall narrative is nothing to write home about, there are some nice moments of genuine sweetness that you wouldn't expect from Team Ninja.

Like the previous Ninja Gaiden, Dragon Sword is supremely confident in its identity. Aside from a few very light puzzle elements sprinkled here and there, this is pure, unadulterated action from start to finish. The developers understand that the fun here derives from slicing and dicing bad guys, and they're mindful to never stand in the way of that. There are no minigames or touch-screen gimmickry; because the game takes advantage of the DS's unique interface in such a fundamental way, it needn't resort to such tactics to justify its existence.

Although this is Team Ninja's first-ever handheld project, the developer clearly realizes the importance of adapting to the portable experience. Dragon Sword is divided into short chapters, and each provides a satisfying, bite-sized chunk of action perfect for the morning commute or a lunch break. Additionally, save points are generously placed, making it even easier to jump in and out of the adventure. Partially because of that, however, the game is considerably less challenging than its (in)famously difficult predecessor. It's not a walk in the park by any means (and once you unlock Head Ninja difficulty, all bets are off), but hardcore fans probably won't see the Game Over screen on more than a handful of occasions. Whether or not that's a good thing likely depends on your level of masochism.

At approximately five hours, Dragon Sword is a bit on the short side, but I have a tough time complaining when those five hours are so tight and extremely polished. Drawing things out would have run the risk of overstaying the game's welcome; as is, I didn't feel the least bit unsatisfied when the credits started to roll. This is an exciting new standard for the action genre on DS, and a game from which other traditional developers should take inspiration. —STEVE T.

WRITERS' BLOCK

IF YOU COULD ADD ONE MORE CHARACTER TO SUPER SMASH BROS. BRAWL, WHO WOULD IT BE?

Chris Hoffman

Either Star Man or the Amazon from Pro Wrestling. If any Nintendo characters belong in an all-star fighting game, it's those guys.

Chris Slate

I'd pick Castlevania's original whip-cracking hero, Simon Belmont. Yeah, Sheik kind of has a whip already, but Belmont would rock harder with the boomerang cross, holy water, dagger, and more.

George Sinfield

Chuck Quizmo from Paper Mario. He could confound opponents with zany questions about the battle.

Steve Thomason

Since Game Arts had a hand in developing the game, I think it would have been only fitting to include villain supreme Ghaleon from the studio's brilliant Lunar RPGs.

Justin Cheng

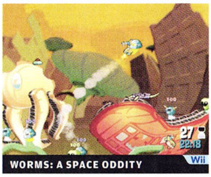
For me, there's only one choice: Cloud Strife. Now before you complain that he wasn't in a Nintendo game, I would like to point out that he was in Kingdom Hearts: Chain of Memories for GBA.

Chris Shepperd

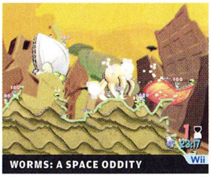
I also pick Simon Belmont. He has a cool primary weapon and plenty of secondary weapons.

Tom Holoien

I'll go with the dog from Duck Hunt. He probably wouldn't make a great playable character, but his trademark laugh is so annoying that I bet he'd make an amusing assist trophy.



WORMS: A SPACE ODDITY

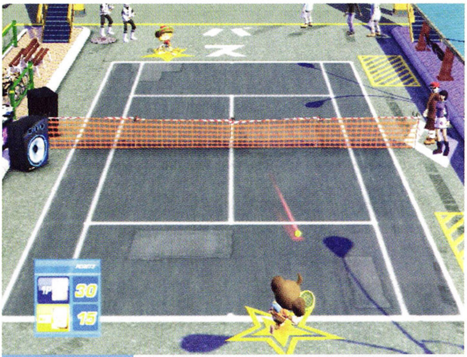


WORMS: A SPACE ODDITY

WORMS: A SPACE ODDITY

RATING: 6.0
PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **THQ**
DEVELOPER: **TEAM17**
ESRB: **EVERYONE 10+**

In some ways, A Space Oddity is the freshest iteration of Team17's prolific Worms franchise to come along in quite a while. The visual style has finally been updated with a neat panoramic effect, and the Wii-imagined controls lend a fun new dynamic to the turn-based shenanigans (even if the throwing mechanic is a bit spotty). But the lack of online play and some questionable design choices prevent the warmongering annelids from truly evolving. The series was doing network play back in the Dreamcast days, so its omission here is inexcusable. And though I understand the desire to make the game more accessible to a casual audience, cutting more than half the weapons from the franchise's standard arsenal seems unnecessary, and will undoubtedly alienate fans. Why not at least give the option to play with the full weapon set? A ho-hum selection of Wii-centric minigames isn't enough to make up for my missing Ninja Rope. Multiplayer skirmishes still make for a good time, and I definitely support the return to 2-D, but this series just can't seem to take a real step forward without taking two steps back. —STEVE T.



TENNIS, ANYONE?

Sonic Smash

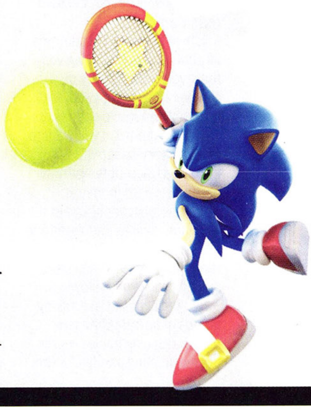
SEGA SUPERSTARS TENNIS

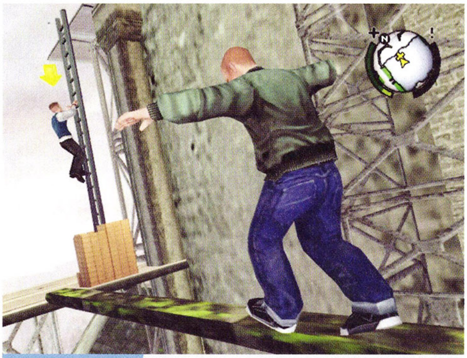
RATING: 8.0
PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **SEGA**
DEVELOPER: **SUMO DIGITAL**
ESRB: **EVERYONE 10+**

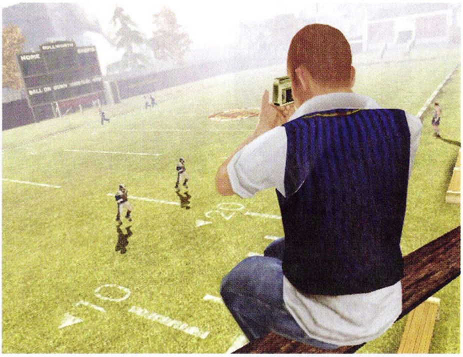
As weird as it may sound, this game reminds me of Super Smash Bros. Of course, it's not exactly the same since Sega Superstars Tennis is a tennis game; but it's a tennis game packed with Sega fan service, bringing together almost all of the company's top franchises—and a couple of obscure ones for good measure.

With a variety of control schemes, Sega Superstars Tennis is easy to pick up and play. You can swing the Wii remote and have the game control your movement, Wii Sports Tennis-style. You can use the nunchuk's Control Stick to move while hitting the ball with the remote, or you can turn the remote sideways like a standard controller (the default control scheme for many of the single-player Superstars mode's minigames). Fortunately, the game also supports the Classic controller, which really is the best way to play because it's more comfortable, accurate, and responsive.

There are 16 playable characters, varying from the usual (Sonic, Tails) to the esoteric (Gilius from Golden Axe, Alex Kidd from...Alex Kidd). But given the vast number of Sega franchises to draw from, I wanted to see some other games being represented, too. (Ryo Hazuki from Shenmue, where are you?) And while multiplayer for up to four players is good fun, it would be even more so if you could play against your friends online. That said, Sega Superstars Tennis is a love letter to Sega fans; if you consider yourself a fan at all, it's a must-buy. —JUSTIN C.







TAKE THIS BULL

School Is Cool

BULLY: SCHOLARSHIP EDITION

RATING: 8.5
PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **ROCKSTAR**
DEVELOPER: **ROCKSTAR**
ESRB: **TEEN**

Being a boarding-school student might not be as glamorous as, say, being an intergalactic bounty hunter or a plumber with a mushroom obsession, but in many ways it's just as fun. Welcome to the world of Bully, where an unlikely setting and unruly characters pave the way for one of the freshest, most diverse gaming experiences in recent years.

Life at Bullworth Academy is all about variety; at any given time, you'll have plenty of choices about what to do, and frequently multiple options of how to do them. Do you want to take on story-based missions, go to class, accept tasks from passersby, earn money at part-time jobs, or engage in frivolities such as kart races and arcade games? Whether you're running errands for teachers, pulling pranks on Halloween, attending English class, taking photos of an unfaithful girlfriend, rescuing hapless nerds, or, um, stealing panties for the gym teacher, the choices are almost always interesting and fun. Alternatively, you can do none of the above; it's easy to while away hours just exploring the school and the surrounding town and its byways (be it on foot, bike, or skateboard), punting garden gnomes or searching for collectibles.

What makes the game especially compelling is how alive everything feels. A day-night cycle keeps events moving, and the seasons and weather change as the game progresses. Regardless of what you're doing, NPCs interact with you and each other, often spouting hilarious dialogue (made even better by the game's superb voice work), and you can respond in kind by using a fairly robust but easily accessible communications system. Or you can just punch them in the face. One of the cool things about Bully is that you have a lot of freedom, but there are consequences to your actions. If you attack other characters you might end up in detention or get arrested; if you ditch classes you won't earn character upgrades; if you stay out too late you'll collapse from exhaustion.

Of course, all of that could be said about the original Bully on PlayStation 2. What sets Scholarship Edition apart are the new controls and new content. For the most part, the controls work very well. The developers didn't go overboard with Wii functionality, but they implemented it where appropriate, such as direct pointing for the first-person aiming with your slingshot and other projectile weapons, and motion-driven controls for most of the classroom activities. I was worried that the fighting controls—which have you swinging the nunchuk for your left hand and the remote for your right hand—would be overkill, but it's a lot of fun (although some of the combos, which require expertly timed presses of the B Button while you're flailing away, are needlessly complex). I think there are some missed opportunities, however—gestures for spray-painting graffiti, for example, would have been great. My other complaints about the controls are that sometimes the game didn't recognize the remote-twisting motion, and that the first-person aiming occasionally feels too sensitive.

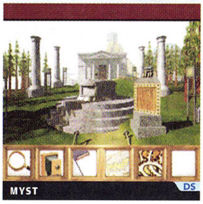
I have no issues, however, with the excellent new content. The added missions are integrated seamlessly into the game and lend extra dimensions to the world and its characters. And the fun new classes—math, biology, music, and geography—really help make the school experience feel more complete; I especially enjoyed the simple but natural remote-and-nunchuk-shaking music class. The two-player versus mode is a nice inclusion, too, even though it probably won't warrant a lot of long-term replay. Whether or not these additions make Scholarship Edition worth playing again if you already experienced it on the PS2 is debatable, but if you're a big fan of the original, you likely won't be let down.

On the other hand, if you never played Bully before, you're almost assuredly in for a treat. Although the open-world framework is everywhere in games these days, the interesting narrative, clever writing, and unique setting yield a game truly unlike anything else. Bully has its flaws—the camera can be a problem, there's occasional graphical pop-up, and the controls sometimes seem like a poor fit for the remote and nunchuk (pressing Z and down on the Control Pad simultaneously to crouch, for example)—but nothing that significantly detracts from the game. School often doesn't leave people with the fondest of memories, but Bully: Scholarship Edition is well worth attending. —CHRIS H.

THE HOUSE OF THE DEAD 2&3 RETURN

MYST ISLAND

THE HOUSE OF THE DEAD 2&3 RETURN


MYST

THE HOUSE OF THE DEAD 2 & 3 RETURN

RATING: 7.0

PLATFORM: Wii
PUBLISHER: SEGA
DEVELOPER: AM1
ESRB: MATURE

It's one of the video game medium's eternal truths: few things are more satisfying than splattering the rotted corpses of the undead. A quintessential example of that principle is Sega's The House of the Dead series. Originally designed for arcades, the second and third installments in the classic zombie-blasting light-gun saga arrive on Wii in one bargain-priced package. For a mere $29.99, you can lobotomize shambling ghouls to your heart's content, and while the games are nine and six years old, respectively, they remain a gleefully mindless guilty pleasure.

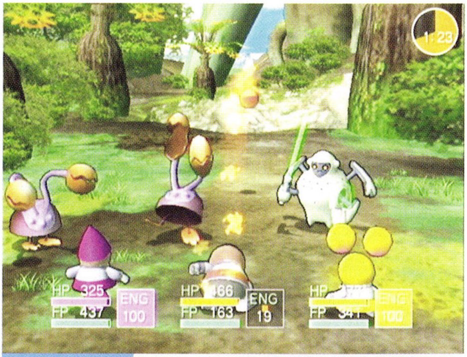
The House of the Dead 2, though especially primitive from a visual standpoint, remains an all-time genre classic. The gunplay feels nice and meaty, the branching level designs offer plenty of replay value, and the voice acting is so very, very bad it's awesome. The Wii version offers both an Arcade mode and the Original mode found in the Dreamcast port, which allows players to equip items that increase the size of their life bar, boost their firepower, etc. The House of the Dead 3 upgrades players to shotguns, and while it doesn't quite live up to its predecessor, it's still a heck of a lot of fun. In addition to Arcade mode, the Wii version includes an all-new unlockable Extreme mode that hikes up the difficulty, but also allows for melee attacks via a simple flick of the Wii remote. Other than that, there's not much new to this compilation, which is admittedly a bit disappointing. But if you enjoy a good light-gun game like I do, this is one house call that's hard to pass up. —STEVE T.

MYST

RATING: 5.0

PLATFORM: DS
PUBLISHER: EMPIRE INTERACTIVE
DEVELOPER: HOPLITE RESEARCH/CYAN WORLDS
ESRB: EVERYONE

It was only last month that I was raving about the prospects of playing point-and-click adventure Myst on DS, but it seems that my romantic notions of the classic title were way out of proportion. Myst may have been an interesting game 10 years ago, but it all feels so tedious, bland, and dated now. The DS version is without the agonizing load times of the PC version, which is certainly nice, but it also makes you realize how startlingly short the game is. Though the DS port manages to maintain a lot of the quirky beauty of the different worlds, it comes at the expense of functionality—buttons and switches are often too small, and it can be difficult to navigate via the touch screen. Myst DS isn't a terrible game, but don't expect to relive the sense of awe you got from the original. —CHRIS SH.



WELL ROUNDED

Oddball Odyssey

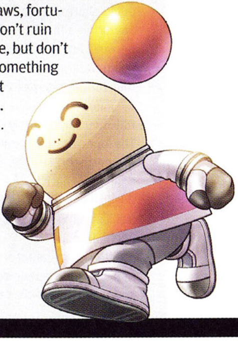
OPOONA

RATING: 7.0

PLATFORM: Wii
PUBLISHER: KOEI
DEVELOPER: ARTE PIAZZA
ESRB: EVERYONE 10+

If you were to judge Opoona solely on its babyish character designs, you would probably conclude that it's an RPG for beginners. And in many ways that's true; the straightforward yet interesting story, simple controls (you can play using only the nunchuk, if you wish), and lack of complex gameplay systems make this quirky RPG a good match for genre newcomers. Even veterans should be able to appreciate the combat, though; fast-paced, easy-to-learn fighting keeps random conflicts fun through an active battle system (in some ways reminiscent of classic Final Fantasy games) in which you rotate through party members and attack by flicking the analog stick to fire your spherical weapon at varying trajectories. Special magiclike techniques and customizable weapons add a little extra depth to the combat, but that's about as complicated as the game gets.

While Opoona boasts nice backgrounds and music, and is fundamentally solid, it's definitely rough around the edges. The game's touted "lifestyle RPG" elements don't actually let you choose careers that influence how you play the game; they amount to little more than side quests that feel like missed opportunities. You'd think that jobs like farming and fishing would lend themselves well to Wii controls, but all the tasks stick to the conventional game engine—even dancing has you merely selecting dance steps from a text list. The game can also get ridiculously confusing due to an inadequate map and some poorly designed areas (especially early on). Throw in a static dungeon camera and some clunky environmental collision, and you have a game that feels like a beginner's RPG in more ways than one. These flaws, fortunately, don't ruin the game, but don't expect something with a lot of polish. —CHRIS H.



DESTROY ALL HUMANS! BIG WILLY UNLEASHED Wii

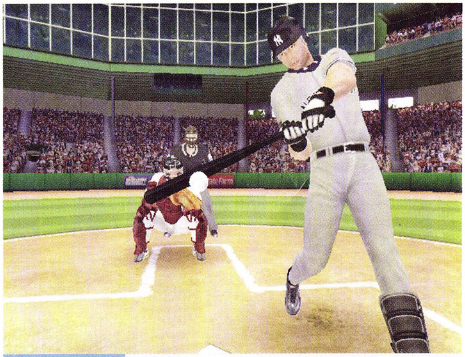
LINE OUT
0.0ft
15:41
TOTAL WEIGHT
3lb 15oz
×2

SEGA BASS FISHING Wii

DESTROY ALL HUMANS! BIG WILLY UNLEASHED Wii

LINE OUT
13.3ft
12:42
TOTAL WEIGHT
4lb 15oz
LINE TENSION
×1

SEGA BASS FISHING Wii



DESTROY ALL HUMANS! BIG WILLY UNLEASHED

RATING: 7.0
PLATFORM: Wii
PUBLISHER: THQ
DEVELOPER: LOCOMOTIVE GAMES
ESRB: TEEN

Just glance at the title and you know what to expect from Destroy All Humans! Big Willy Unleashed: more human-destroying fun with Crypto and his holographic buddy Pox (during the '70s this time), and "Big Willy" puns aplenty. (Big Willy being the name of Pox's fast-food chain that serves up—spoiler alert—all of the humans Crypto has, er, destroyed over the past few games.) There are so many puns, in fact, that even Crypto tries to—unsuccessfully—put a stop to it. The dialogue is at its best when it breaks the fourth wall, not when it's beating you over the head with its juvenile humor.

Big Willy Unleashed is not without its share of issues, of course. The story—a fast-food empire war between Pox and fried-chicken king Colonel Kluckin—feels smaller scale than the prior games. Considering the game doesn't have a "3" in its title, that's not entirely surprising. The four cities are architecturally and aesthetically different, but the denizens in each are not—no doubt due to hardware limitations, which also explains the draw distance and generally poor AI.

Still, the actual act of destroying humans works rather well with the newly implemented motion controls. Point at your target and shoot with the Wii remote, or use Crypto's telekinesis and flick the remote to fling objects. And Crypto's new weapons, like the Zombie Gun (which turns people into the cannibalistic living dead) or the drivable Big Willy itself, help keeps things varied for the six or so hours it takes to beat the single-player campaign. Too bad the co-op play is relegated to a separate multiplayer mode, though. —JUSTIN C.

SEGA BASS FISHING

RATING: 5.0
PLATFORM: Wii
PUBLISHER: SEGA
DEVELOPER: CAVIA
ESRB: EVERYONE

Sega Bass Fishing, a port of a nine-year-old Dreamcast and arcade game, is pretty much what you would expect it to be. Though the game allows you to choose from multiple modes, like Arcade, Nature Trip, and Tournament, their differences are subtle, and you'll find yourself doing a lot of...well, bass fishing. Graphically, the game really shows its age, especially in the nearly identical varieties of fish and the drab environments. While the game incorporates motion controls relatively well, in-game directions are given in text, not pictures, which makes it harder to react quickly. In the end, unless you're really into bass fishing or want a throwback to the Dreamcast days, Sega Bass Fishing isn't worth your time. —TOM H.

CUP OF COFFEE

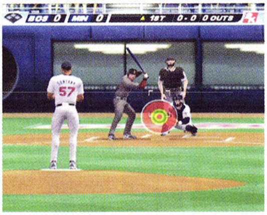
Rookie Ball

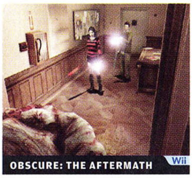
MLB 2K8

RATING: 6.5
PLATFORM: Wii
PUBLISHER: 2K SPORTS
DEVELOPER: KUSH GAMES
ESRB: EVERYONE

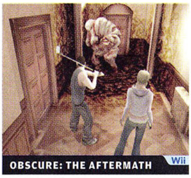
This one's a tough call. On the one hand, it's nice to finally have a realistic baseball sim on Wii, and MLB 2K8 has good fundamentals. The batting and pitching interfaces are solid, fielding and base running feel simple yet reliable, and the Inside Edge scouting data will delight even the most hardcore stat junkies. On the other hand, the Wii version doesn't include any of the cool new additions found in this year's PS3 or Xbox 360 games: no minor-league teams, no trading-card mode, and absolutely no online functionality whatsoever. It's essentially last year's edition with Wii controls tacked on. And while those controls do add a level of immersion, a couple of minor yet annoying problems prevent them from being an unqualified success. One particularly frustrating example is that batters will occasionally check their swings even when you take a full hack with the Wii remote. And if you're anything like me, should strike three happen to cross the plate during such an occurrence, you're liable to make Bobby Cox look downright serene.

Lots of other niggling things will get under the skin of baseball purists. There are too many home runs, the computer has a bizarre tendency to make frequent pick-off attempts at second base, and franchise mode is riddled with inaccuracies, including player contracts that don't reflect their real-world counterparts. The game's also a bit of an eye sore due to incredibly flat lighting and lackluster player likenesses. If you're a die-hard fan of the great American pastime and don't own any other consoles, this is still a decent game of baseball. But I'd be hard pressed to recommend it to someone who has other options. —STEVE T.

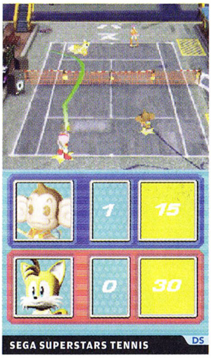




OBSCURE: THE AFTERMATH



OBSCURE: THE AFTERMATH



SEGA SUPERSTARS TENNIS

OBSCURE: THE AFTERMATH

RATING: 7.0

PLATFORM: Wii
PUBLISHER: IGNITION
DEVELOPER: HYDRAVISION
ESRB: MATURE

There haven't been many survival-horror games on Wii, so genre junkies (like me) will have to take what we can get. While Obscure: The Aftermath is no Resident Evil 4, it does have the traditional survival-horror elements: monsters, puzzle-solving, darkened, dilapidated environments, and all that good stuff. Well, with one major exception: it's not especially scary. The monsters are certainly grotesque, but the game lacks the overall sense of uneasiness and dread that similar games offer. Part of the reason is the campiness of the characters—they're designed to be stereotypical college kids, and their dialogue comes off as such, which can clash with the ostensibly frightening situations they find themselves in.

So, sure, Obscure: The Aftermath doesn't exactly succeed as a *horror* game, but it is fun, with some good usage of the Wii remote. And the game is even better when played cooperatively, just like its prequel. Playing solo is not a total loss, as the AI is decent enough to hold its own against the game's many monsters, but it's not nearly as enjoyable.

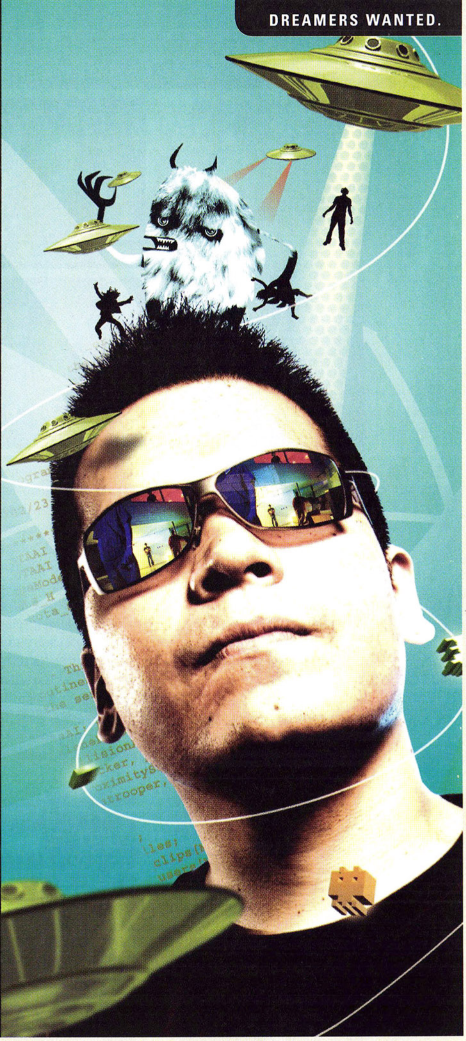
The sad thing is that there's little reason to replay the game once you've completed the very linear adventure (but make sure to stick around after the credits). There's some unlockable art, movies, and music, but that's little incentive. Still, the drop-in co-op play and the $30 price tag make it a worthwhile experience for at least one play through. —JUSTIN C.

SEGA SUPERSTARS TENNIS

RATING: 8.0

PLATFORM: NINTENDO DS
PUBLISHER: SEGA
DEVELOPER: SUMO DIGITAL
ESRB: EVERYONE

Trying its level best to be the Sega-themed equivalent of Mario Tennis, Sega Superstars Tennis for DS gives us a smorgasbord of courts, characters, and minigames from the publisher's storied past. The default button-based control scheme is less forgiving than that of the Mario titles, calling for more precision and tighter timing—either a welcome challenge or a minor frustration depending on how much you mind AiAi acing one past you. Optional touch-based control makes it tricky to get to the ball—directing your character with the stylus while you're watching the action on the top screen—but once you do reach it, your character will hit it automatically. That's almost too easy. Control issues aside, Sega Superstars Tennis is swimming in clever game references and should be fun for even a casual Sega fan. —GEORGE S.



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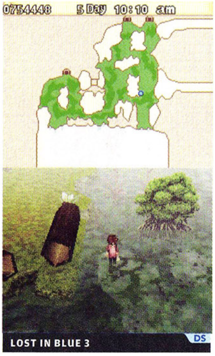
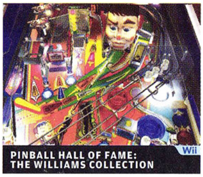
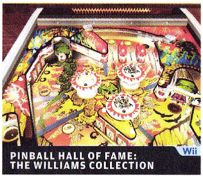

LOST IN BLUE 3 DS

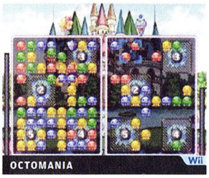

PINBALL HALL OF FAME: THE WILLIAMS COLLECTION Wii

BAROQUE Wii

MINICOPTER: ADVENTURE FLIGHT Wii


PINBALL HALL OF FAME: THE WILLIAMS COLLECTION Wii

BAROQUE Wii


OCTOMANIA Wii

LOST IN BLUE 3

RATING: 5.5
PLATFORM: **DS**
PUBLISHER: **KONAMI**
DEVELOPER: **HUDSON**
ESRB: **EVERYONE 10+**

Everything is a struggle in Lost in Blue 3. If you've played the previous titles, you know the drill: your castaways are tired, thirsty, and hungry—really hungry. A fish and a couple of coconuts aren't going to tide them over for the day. You can't get them to eat raw seaweed or clams either. You have to find a way to cook them. And if your cooking skills aren't up to snuff, the picky eaters will be less nourished by the food than if it had been prepared properly. The game's prerelease materials suggested that this third chapter would balance the survival aspects of its predecessors with strong story and adventure elements that reveal the motivations of the four selectable characters. In that vein, the survivors have different specialties, and once they find each other, they can offer aid and insight to one another. The problem is that the core gameplay just can't get away from its intense focus on survival. Wander off looking for a way to open a locked door or explore a new path (the types of things you do in any good adventure game) and you will watch your characters' stamina, food, and water levels plummet. Unless you are as obsessed as the gamemakers are with seeing to the base needs of the castaways, you will view the endless resting and food gathering as chores—not fun activities like the dozens of touch-based minigames that are hidden away as much-too-infrequent prizes for your survival. Because the characters have different abilities and start in different places, your playing experience will vary greatly depending on which one you select. You may find fresh water from the start or watch your castaways go thirsty for lack of a water source. The variance seems to have put a strain on game tuning, turning the possibility of a cohesive adventure into a lost opportunity. —GEORGE S.

PINBALL HALL OF FAME: THE WILLIAMS COLLECTION

RATING: 7.5
PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **CRAVE**
DEVELOPER: **FARSIGHT STUDIOS**
ESRB: **EVERYONE 10+**

It's somewhat hard to review a pinball game. For the most part, if you've seen one pinball game, you've seen them all, and you either like knocking a virtual metal ball around a playfield or you don't. If you *do* like pinball, you're in luck—Pinball Hall of Fame: The Williams Collection is as close to owning a real pinball table as most people are going to get. The game authentically re-creates 10 pinball games from years gone by—including Pinbot, Black Knight, and Whirlwind—with exacting detail. Not every game is fantastic (Jive Time? No thanks.), but most feature fun, well-designed playfields that make them classics. The Wii controls feel completely natural (shaking the remote or nunchuk to nudge the table is a great touch), and multiple goals for every game will keep you playing. —CHRIS H.

BAROQUE

RATING: 3.0
PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **ATLUS**
DEVELOPER: **STING**
ESRB: **TEEN**

You may not have heard of it until now, but the Baroque series has been around for almost a decade in Japan. And while we usually envy Japanese gamers for getting games we don't, in this case we would have been better off without it.

You spend the majority of your time wandering through dungeons and fighting monsters in real time. As in most dungeon-crawlers, Baroque's combat is slowed down to the point that it almost feels turn-based, and it quickly grows boring. As you progress, you gain experience and collect items as you might expect, but when you die (a key gameplay element), you lose everything and have to start from square one.

On top of the boring gameplay, Baroque just throws you into the action from the get-go, with no explanation of what is going on or who you are. (The main character, conveniently, has amnesia.) When you die and are reincarnated, more of the story is explained, but it's in little bits and pieces, and you'll often find yourself wondering what to do and where to go next.

The rest of Baroque is underwhelming as well. The graphics are average, and the dungeons are drab and unimpressive. The localization—from lines that are completely nonsensical to the character who cheerfully adds "goddammit" to every sentence—is laughably bad, and doesn't make the story any easier to comprehend. All in all, Baroque has few redeeming qualities, and your money is better spent elsewhere. —TOM H.

ALSO THIS MONTH

We ran out of space to run a full-length review on Aksys Games's **MiniCopter: Adventure Flight** for Wii, but gamers looking for a unique RC-style flight experience should check it out.... Conspiracy's puzzler **Octomania** for Wii comes from the makers of Puyo Pop and offers similar color-matching fun.... Wage war on terror, light-gun style, in Konami's **Target: Terror for Wii**.... Konami's hit footie series, **Pro Evolution Soccer**, is also Wii-bound.... Basketball, golf, lawn darts, and more provide fun in the sun in Destineer's **Summer Sports: Paradise Island**.... So you wanna be a ninja? See if you'll make the cut in EA's **Ninja Reflex** for Wii and DS.... Do you like your pets cute and fuzzy or bloodthirsty and murderous? Either way, Ubisoft has you covered with **Petz: Bunnyz** and **Petz Wild Animals: Tigerz** for DS.

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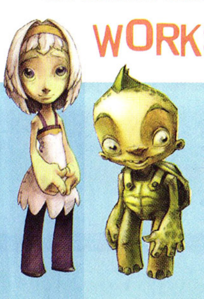

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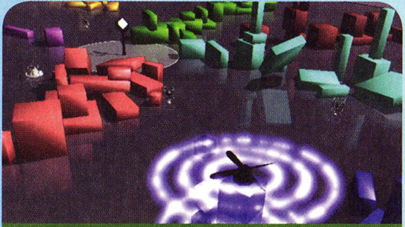
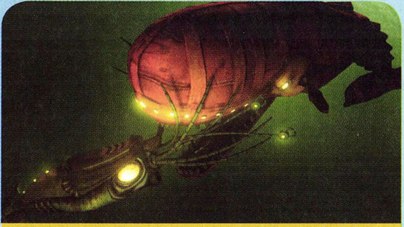


Game Programming



3D Animation

Robotics

[ARCHIVE]

SMASHING SUCCESS

Well, it's finally here: Nintendo's fan-pleasing Super Smash Bros. Brawl for Wii proved that it was worth the wait, earning a rare 10. (Yes, that means it's slightly better than the amazing Super Mario Galaxy.) But while Brawl was certainly the best game last month, there were two other standouts. Capcom's Apollo Justice: Ace Attorney for DS (8.0) continued the series' tradition of excellence (even if we found ourselves missing former main man Phoenix Wright), and Ubisoft's No More Heroes (8.0) proved that great games don't always have to make sense.

SCORES REFLECT INDIVIDUAL REVIEWERS' OPINIONS.
• INDICATES WI-FI COMPATIBLE

Wii				
TITLE	SCORE	PUBLISHER	VOL.	ESRB
Alien Syndrome	6.0	Sega	220	T
Alvin and the Chipmunks	N/A	Brash	224	E
• Battalion Wars 2	7.5	Nintendo	222	T
Ben 10: Protector of Earth	N/A	D3PA	223	E10+
The Bigs	6.0	2K Sports	218	E
Bionicle Heroes	5.0	Eidos	216	E10+
Blazing Angels: Squadrons of WWII	7.0	Ubisoft	215	T
Bleach: Shattered Blade	N/A	Sega	222	T
Bomberman Land	5.0	Hudson	226	E
Boogie	5.5	Electronic Arts	220	E10+
Brunswick Pro Bowling	6.0	Crave	219	E
Bust-a-Move Bash!	6.5	Majesco	217	E
Carnival Games	7.0	Global Star	220	E
Code Lyoko: Quest for Infinity	N/A	The Game Factory	223	E10+
Cooking Mama: Cook Off	7.5	Majesco	216	E
Cosmic Family	N/A	Ubisoft	215	E
Cranium Kabookii	N/A	Ubisoft	224	E
Crash of the Titans	6.5	Sierra	221	E10+
Cruis'n	N/A	Midway	224	E
CSI: Hard Evidence	N/A	Ubisoft	225	M
Dance Dance Revolution: Hottest Party	8.0	Konami	221	E10+
Dave Mirra BMX Challenge	4.0	Crave	220	E
• Dewy's Adventure	7.0	Konami	221	E
Donkey Kong: Barrel Blast	6.5	Nintendo	221	E
Dragon Ball Z: Budokai Tenkaichi 3	N/A	Atari	223	T
Dragon Quest Swords: The Masked Queen and the Tower of Mirrors	7.0	Square Enix	226	T
Driver: Parallel Lines	5.0	Ubisoft	219	M
• Endless Ocean	7.5	Nintendo	225	E
Escape from Bug Island!	3.5	Eidos	217	M
• FIFA 08	N/A	Electronic Arts	222	E
Fire Emblem: Radiant Dawn	9.5	Nintendo	222	E10+
Furu Furu Park	N/A	Majesco	225	T
Game Party	N/A	Midway	224	E
• Geometry Wars: Galaxies	8.0	Sierra	222	E
• Ghost Squad	7.0	Sega	223	T
The Godfather: Blackhand Edition	8.0	Electronic Arts	216	M
Godzilla Unleashed	5.5	Atari	223	E10+
The Golden Compass	4.0	Sega	224	E10+
Guilty Gear XX Accent Core	8.0	Aksys Games	222	T
• Guitar Hero III: Legends of Rock	9.0	Activision	222	T
Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix	7.0	Electronic Arts	218	E10+
Harvey Birdman: Attorney at Law	6.5	Capcom	224	T
Heatseeker	7.5	Codemasters	215	T
High School Musical: Sing It!	N/A	Disney Interactive	223	E
Indoor Sports	N/A	Konami	223	E
Indy 500 Legends	N/A	Destineer	223	E
Jenga	N/A	Atari	223	E
Jumper	N/A	Brash	226	T
Karaoke Revolution Presents American Idol Encore	N/A	Konami	226	E
Kawasaki Quad Bikes	N/A	Destineer	223	E
Kidz Sports: Basketball	N/A	Destineer	224	E
Kidz Sports: Ice Hockey	N/A	Destineer	225	E
Kororinpa: Marble Mania	7.0	Hudson Soft/ Konami	215	E
Legend of the Dragon	5.5	The Game Factory	218	T
LEGO Star Wars: The Complete Saga	N/A	LucasArts	222	E
Link's Crossbow Training	6.5	Nintendo	223	T
Looney Tunes: Acme Arsenal	3.5	WB Games	221	E10+
• Madden NFL 08	8.0	Electronic Arts	220	E
Manhunt 2	7.5	Rockstar Games	223	M
• Mario & Sonic at the Olympic Games	7.5	Sega	223	E
Mario Party 8	7.5	Nintendo	217	E
• Mario Strikers Charged	8.5	Nintendo	219	E10+
• Medal of Honor Heroes 2	8.0	Electronic Arts	223	T
Medal of Honor: Vanguard	6.0	Electronic Arts	217	T
Meet the Robinsons	6.5	Buena Vista	215	E10+
Mercury Meltdown Revolution	6.0	Ignition	221	E
Metroid Prime 3: Corruption	10	Nintendo	220	T
MLB Power Pros	6.5	2K Sports	222	E
Mortal Kombat: Armageddon	8.0	Midway	217	M
• MX vs. ATV Untamed	6.0	THQ	224	E
My Horse and Me	N/A	Atari	225	E
My Word Coach	N/A	Ubisoft	223	E
MySims	7.0	Electronic Arts	221	E
Namco Museum Remix	N/A	Namco Bandai	222	E
Naruto: Clash of Ninja Revolution	7.0	Tomy/D3PA	222	T
Need For Speed ProStreet	8.0	Electronic Arts	223	E10+
Nicktoons: Attack of the Toybots	N/A	THQ	223	E
• NiGHTS: Journey of Dreams	9.0	Sega	224	E
• Nitro Bike	3.5	Ubisoft	225	E10+
No More Heroes	8.0	Ubisoft	226	M
One Piece: Unlimited Adventure	6.5	Namco Bandai	225	T
Pirates of the Caribbean: At World's End	4.5	Disney Interactive	217	T
• Pokémon Battle Revolution	6.5	Nintendo	218	E
Prince of Persia: Rival Swords	7.0	Ubisoft	215	T
Puzzle Quest: Challenge of the Warlords	N/A	D3PA	224	E10+
Ratatouille	7.5	THQ	218	E
• Rayman Raving Rabbids 2	6.5	Ubisoft	223	E10+
Resident Evil: The Umbrella Chronicles	8.0	Capcom	223	M
Resident Evil 4: Wii Edition	9.0	Capcom	218	M
Rockstar Games Presents Table Tennis	N/A	Rockstar	222	E
Samurai Warriors: Katana	7.5	Koei	224	T
Scarface: The World Is Yours	7.5	Sierra	218	M
Showtime Championship Boxing	N/A	Jack of All Games	224	E10+
The Simpsons Game	4.0	Electronic Arts	223	T
Smarty Pants	N/A	Electronic Arts	223	E
• Sonic Riders: Zero Gravity	7.0	Sega	225	E
Soulcalibur Legends	6.5	Namco Bandai	223	T
Spider-Man 3	6.0	Activision	217	T
SSX Blur	8.5	Electronic Arts	215	E
Super Mario Galaxy	9.5	Nintendo	223	E
Super Paper Mario	9.5	Nintendo	216	E
• Super Smash Bros. Brawl	10	Nintendo	226	T
Super Swing Golf Season 2	6.5	Tecmo	224	E10+
Surf's Up	6.0	Ubisoft	217	E10+
Tamagotchi: Party On!	2.5	Namco Bandai	217	E
Thrillville: Off the Rails	N/A	LucasArts	222	E
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 08	8.0	Electronic Arts	221	E
TMNT	5.0	Ubisoft	215	E10+
Tomb Raider Anniversary	6.5	Eidos	223	T
Transformers: The Game	5.5	Activision	219	T
Trauma Center: New Blood	8.0	Atlus	223	T
Victorious Boxers: Revolution	N/A	XSEED	222	T
Wing Island	5.5	Hudson Soft/ Konami	215	E
WWE SmackDown vs. Raw 2008	6.5	THQ	222	T
WWII Aces	3.0	Destineer	226	T
Zack & Wiki: Quest for Barbaros' Treasure	9.0	Capcom	222	E
NINTENDO GAMECUBE				
Meet the Robinsons	N/A	Buena Vista	215	E10+
Radio Allergy	5.0	O~3	215	E

REVIEWER NOTES

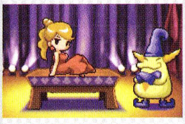
SUPER MARIO GALAXY

It's rare that a game is so good that a 9.5 seems criminally low. Galaxy isn't just the most imaginative platformer in years; it also sets new standards for what the Wii hardware is capable of. While novices can scrape together enough stars to beat the game, going for all 120 offers some of the most fun, challenging, and memorable gameplay in years. In my book, Galaxy is a big-time 10. —CHRIS SL.

FINAL FANTASY CRYSTAL CHRONICLES: RING OF FATES

I thought that Shepperd was a little harsh in his criticisms of Ring of Fates. The game has its flaws, but I found it to be a charming, worthwhile adventure.

—STEVE T.



MASTER OF ILLUSION

I never developed the dexterity for sleight of hand in my early-teen amateur magician phase, but an interest in learning how tricks work has stayed with me over the years. Master of Illusion lets me relive some of my geekier memories of putting on magic shows in the basement. I'm slightly cooler now, but I still like a good card trick. —GEORGE S.

NINTENDO DS				
• Advance Wars: Days of Ruin	8.5	Nintendo	225	E10+
Alvin and the Chipmunks	N/A	Brash	223	E
American Girl: Julie Finds a Way	N/A	THQ	224	E
Apollo Justice: Ace Attorney	8.0	Capcom	226	T
Are you Smarter Than a 5th Grader?	N/A	THQ	223	E
Assassin's Creed: Altair's Chronicles	7.5	Ubisoft	226	T
Balls of Fury	N/A	Destination Software	222	E10+
• Bleach: The Blade of Fate	8.5	Sega	222	T
• Bomberman Land Touch! 2	6.0	Hudson	225	E
Boogie	7.0	Electronic Arts	224	E10+
Brain Challenge	N/A	Ubisoft	225	E
Bratz: Super Babyz	N/A	THQ	226	E
Brothers In Arms DS	9.0	Ubisoft	218	T
Build-A-Bear Workshop	N/A	The Game Factory	223	E
Cake Mania	5.5	Majesco	216	E
Call of Duty 4: Modern Warfare	N/A	Activision	223	T
Chibi-Robo: Park Patrol	8.5	Nintendo	221	E
Code Lyoko	7.0	The Game Factory	218	E10+
Contra 4	8.5	Konami	222	T
Cookie & Cream	6.5	Agetec	217	E
Corvette Evolution GT	N/A	Jack of All Games	223	E
Cooking Mama 2: Dinner with Friends	7.0	Majesco	223	E
• Custom Robo Arena	7.5	Nintendo	215	E10+
Death Jr. and the Science Fair of Doom	5.0	Konami	217	E10+
Dementium: The Ward	8.5	Gamecock	223	M
Diner Dash: Sizzle & Serve	6.5	Eidos	217	E
DK Jungle Climber	8.0	Nintendo	221	E
Draglade	7.5	Atlus	224	E10+
Dragon Ball Z: Harukanaru Densetsu	4.0	Atari	217	E
Dragon Quest Monsters: Joker	8.0	Square Enix	222	E10+
Drawn to Life	7.5	THQ	221	E
Dungeon Explorer: Warriors of Ancient Arts	6.5	Hudson	226	T
Dynasty Warriors DS: Fighter's Battle	7.5	Koei	219	E10+
Etrian Odyssey	7.0	Atlus	217	T
F-24 Stealth Fighter	3.5	Majesco	215	E10+
Fantastic Four: Rise of the Silver Surfer	2.0	2K Games	218	E10+
FIFA 08	8.0	Electronic Arts	221	E
• Final Fantasy Crystal Chronicles: Ring of Fates	7.0	Square Enix	226	E10+
• Final Fantasy Fables: Chocobo Tales	7.0	Square Enix	216	E
Final Fantasy XII: Revenant Wings	7.5	Square Enix	223	E10+
Flipper Critters	4.5	Ignition Entertainment	218	E
Freedom Wings	6.0	Natsume	207	E10+
Front Mission	6.5	Square Enix	222	E10+
Fullmetal Alchemist Trading Card Game	7.0	Destineer	219	T
Garfield Gets Real	N/A	Destination	223	E
Garfield's Nightmare	7.0	The Game Factory	220	E
• Geometry Wars: Galaxies	N/A	Sierra	222	E
Glory Days 2: Brotherhood of Men	6.0	Eidos	218	E10+
Godzilla Unleashed: Double Smash	3.0	Atari	224	E
The Golden Compass	N/A	Sega	223	E10+
Hannah Montana: Music Jam	N/A	Disney Interactive	223	E
Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix	7.0	Electronic Arts	218	E10+
Harvest Moon DS Cute	7.5	Natsume	226	E
• Heroes of Mana	6.5	Square Enix	219	E10+
Homie Rollerz	N/A	Destineer	226	E
Hoshigami Remix	6.0	Aksys Games	218	E
Impossible Mission	N/A	Codemasters	223	E
Indy 500 Legends	N/A	Destineer	224	E
Insecticide	6.5	Gamecock	226	E10+
Jackass: The Game	N/A	Red Mile Entertainment	225	T
Left Brain, Right Brain	N/A	Majesco	224	E
• The Legend of Zelda: Phantom Hourglass	9.5	Nintendo	221	E
LEGO Star Wars: The Complete Saga	N/A	LucasArts	222	E
LifeSigns: Surgical Unit	N/A	Dreamcatcher	223	T
Looney Tunes: Duck Amuck	8.5	WB Games	221	E
Lost in Blue 2	5.0	Konami	215	E10+
• Luminous Arc	8.0	Atlus	219	T
Madden NFL 08	7.5	Electronic Arts	220	E
• Mario & Sonic at the Olympic Games	7.5	Sega	225	E
Mario Party DS	8.0	Nintendo	223	E
Master of Illusion	N/A	Nintendo	223	E
Meet the Robinsons	N/A	Buena Vista	215	E10+
• Mega Man Star Force	7.5	Capcom	220	E
Mega Man ZX Advent	8.5	Capcom	222	E10+
Miami Nights: Singles in the City	N/A	Ubisoft	225	T
Monster Jam	N/A	Activision	223	E
MX vs. ATV Untamed	6.0	THQ	224	E
My Horse and Me	N/A	Atari	225	E
MySims	N/A	Electronic Arts	222	E
Mystery Dungeon: Shiren the Wanderer	6.5	Sega	226	E
Namco Museum DS	8.0	Namco Bandai	221	E
• Nanostray 2	6.0	Majesco	225	E
Naruto: Ninja Council 3	6.0	Tomy/D3PA	217	E10+
Naruto: Ninja Destiny	7.0	Tomy/D3PA	226	T
Naruto: Path of the Ninja	7.0	Tomy/D3PA	222	E10+
• Need For Speed ProStreet	N/A	Electronic Arts	223	E
Nervous Brickdown	7.0	Eidos	219	E
Ontamarama	7.0	Atlus	223	E
Operation: Vietnam	8.0	Majesco	220	T
Orcs & Elves	5.0	Electronic Arts	223	T
Panzer Tactics DS	N/A	Conspiracy	223	E10+
Pet Alien	8.0	The Game Factory	219	E
Phoenix Wright: Ace Attorney Trials and Tribulations	8.5	Capcom	222	T
• Picross DS	8.0	Nintendo	219	E
Pirates of the Caribbean: At World's End	7.0	Disney Interactive	217	E10+
• Planet Puzzle League	8.5	Nintendo	217	E
• Pogo Island	7.0	Electronic Arts	215	E
• Pokémon Diamond/Pearl	9.0	Nintendo	216	E
Prism: Light the Way	8.5	Eidos	219	E
Professional Fisherman's Tour: Northern Hemisphere	5.0	UFO Interactive	219	E
• Professor Layton and the Curious Village	8.5	Nintendo	225	E
Puppy Palace	N/A	Ubisoft	225	E
Puzzle de Harvest Moon	N/A	Natsume	223	E
Puzzle Quest: Challenge of the Warlords	4.0	D3PA	215	E10+
• Race Driver: Create & Race	7.5	Codemasters	219	T
Rayman Raving Rabbids 2	N/A	Ubisoft	223	E10+
• River King: Mystic Valley	7.0	Natsume	225	E
• Rune Factory: A Fantasy Harvest Moon	7.0	Natsume	219	E
The Settlers	5.0	Ubisoft	217	E
Shrek The Third	7.0	Activision	217	E
SimCity DS	8.0	Electronic Arts	218	E
The Simpsons Game	N/A	Electronic Arts	223	T
SNK Vs. Capcom Card Fighters DS	7.0	SNK Playmore	215	T
Sonic Rush Adventure	9.0	Sega	221	E
Spider-Man 3	7.0	Activision	217	E10+
Strawberry Shortcake: 4 Seasons Cake	N/A	Jack of All Games	224	E
Theme Park	6.0	Electronic Arts	215	E
Thrillville: Off the Rails	N/A	LucasArts	222	E
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 08	8.5	Electronic Arts	221	E
Time Ace	6.5	Konami	216	E10+
Touch Detective 2 ½	6.5	Atlus	221	E
Touch The Dead	5.5	Eidos	217	M
• TouchMaster	8.0	Midway	219	E
• Transformers: Autobots	6.0	Activision	219	E10+
• Transformers: Decepticons	6.0	Activision	219	E10+
Ultimate Mortal Kombat	N/A	Midway	223	M
• Warhammer 40,000: Squad Command	8.0	THQ	224	T
The Wild West	3.5	Majesco	220	E10+
Wordjong	N/A	Destineer	224	E
Worms: Open Warfare 2	7.5	THQ	221	E10+
WWE SmackDown vs. Raw 2008	N/A	THQ	222	T
• Yu-Gi-Oh! World Championship Tournament 2007	N/A	Konami	215	E
• Yu-Gi-Oh! World Championship Tournament 2008	N/A	Konami	224	E
Zoo Tycoon 2 DS	7.0	THQ	226	E
GAME BOY ADVANCE				
Meet the Robinsons	N/A	Buena Vista	215	E

NO MORE HEROES

If I were to sum up No More Heroes for Wii in two words, I'd have to say that it's "crazy awesome." Like Killer 7 for GCN, No More Heroes is a game with a ton of style—so much, in fact, that it more than makes up for the game's flaws. Yeah, like Chris Sl. said in his review, the combat can get repetitive, but the insane, postmodern, over-the-top nature of the game as a whole is, well, crazy awesome. —JUSTIN C.

ENDLESS OCEAN

> ***To be honest, I never thought I'd be interested in something like Endless Ocean. However, once I started exploring the ocean's depths in this relaxing, stress-free game, I was absolutely hooked.***
>
> —JUSTIN C.

CHIBI-ROBO: PARK PATROL

Without the platforming elements and strong emotional underpinnings of the original Chibi-Robo on GameCube, Park Patrol isn't as fulfilling as its predecessor. The DS sequel is, however, a relaxing game with plentiful creative simulation aspects, and it makes good use of the touch-screen controls. The quirky humor is still in full effect, too. —CHRIS H.

EVENTS

Curiouser and Curiouser

Big hats and puzzles galore at the Professor Layton and the Curious Village launch.

Professor Layton and the Curious V
Curious V

Lauren Carrion and her brother Nicasio Guzman put on their thinking caps to solve the puzzles of Professor Layton and the Curious Village.

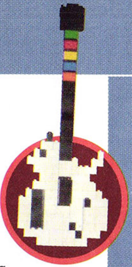
The novelty-sized brown foam hats with red trim at the Nintendo World Store in New York's Rockefeller Center on February 10th said it all: Professor Layton and the Curious Village had arrived, and gamers young and old were on hand to claim their copies of the story-oriented puzzler. Between gaming sessions, those in attendance answered riddles for the chance to be entered in a raffle. A riddle example: "Five cats can catch five mice in five minutes. How many cats does it take to catch 100 mice in 100 minutes?" Answer: Five. Their skill at solving head-scratchers helped Derrick Kennelty and Wilson Watkins, as both won the game and the also-just-released Cobalt/Black DS Lite (the seventh in the line of customized colors). The event's main attraction was a speed-playing tournament in which more than 20 competitors tried to solve as many puzzles from the beginning of the game as they could in 10 minutes. Winner William J. Thompson solved eight puzzles, then four more in a five-minute runoff, taking home the game and a Cobalt/Black DS Lite engraved with the game's logo and date of the event. —GEORGE S.

Professor Layton and the Curious Village

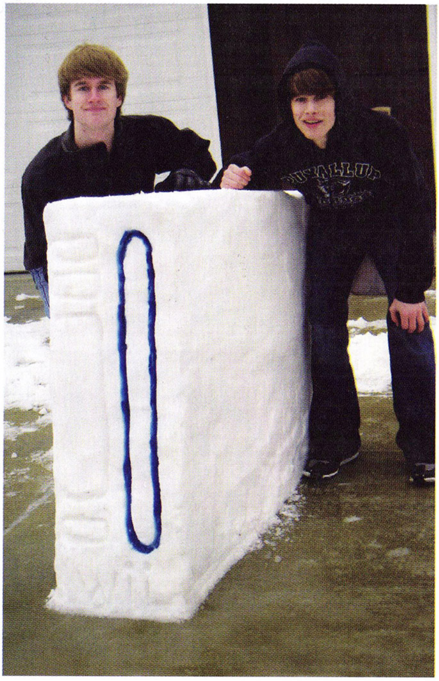
As if the fashion challenge of the Professor Layton event wasn't enough, competitors also had to play through the opening section of the game with flawless precision.

FANDOM

LEGO My Guitar!



We love Guitar Hero as much as the next gamers, but reader Andrew S. takes his love for the series to the next level. He's so into the game that he sees guitars wherever he goes...even in his LEGOs. Though a bit smaller than the real thing, Andrew's LEGO replica of his Guitar Hero guitar looks just like the original, and it gets extra points for looking like an 8-bit sprite. It's not useful as a peripheral (lack of electrical components aside, it would probably fall apart with extensive use), but it's certainly a worthy piece of fandom. —TOM H.



FANDOM

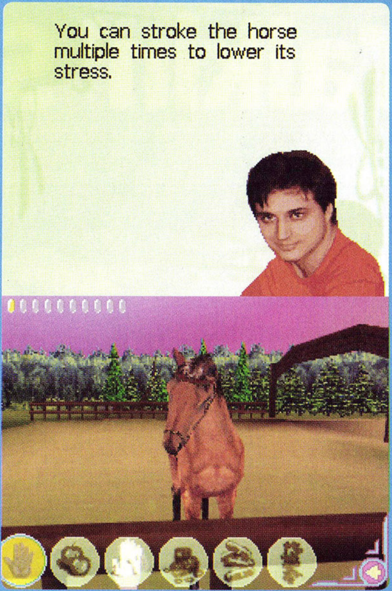
Snow-Wii Weather

It doesn't snow here in San Francisco, but some of you out there have probably had to deal with a lot of it this winter. To reader Karl H. and his brother, though, the snow isn't such a bad thing—it's a medium for expressing their fandom. After building a boring old snowman, Karl decided they should build something more fun: a snow Wii, complete with snow buttons and even a blue-outlined disc drive. As cool as it is, though (no pun intended), we'd recommend against plugging it in—water and electricity don't mix. Trust us on that one. —TOM H.

WRITE YOUR OWN CAPTION

Screen Test

While the baby from Volume 225's Imagine Babyz screenshot may not be very happy, readers were, as evidenced by their captions below. This time around, we've got a screenshot with some real horsepower. (Sorry for the bad pun, but we couldn't resist.) Email your blue-ribbon caption to **screentest@futureus.com.**

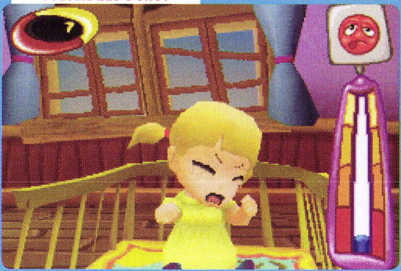


You can stroke the horse multiple times to lower its stress.

The horse was probably a lot less stressed before Mr. Creepy Eyes showed up.

HERE'S OUR CAPTION.
Think you can do better?

VOLUME 225'S SHOT



"But I want Super Smash Bros. Brawl NOW!" —CHELSEA Z.
"Is it just me, or is that baby boxing for a baba?" —OWEN M.
"Despite her best efforts, little Tabitha remained firmly rooted in the lower red zone of the Tantrum-ometer." —GREG E.
"Never trust your baby daughter to install your window." —JB
"Just cutting some onions!" —WEIRDCANDYCAIN

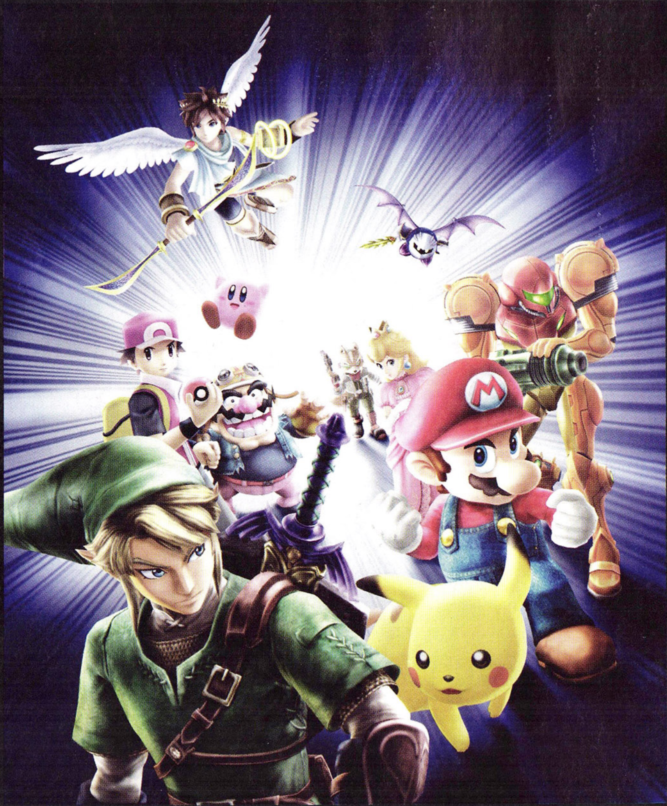
May 2008 Vol. 228

NEXT MONTH

The Brawl never ends!

Talkin' Smash

Tired of Super Smash Bros. Brawl yet? We didn't think so. Next month we'll chat with director Masahiro Sakurai for the inside scoop on the game's development. We'll also have the latest Wii and DS offerings from Square Enix, plus a couple of cool surprises that will make you cheer.



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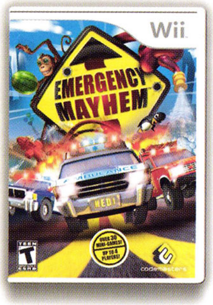
IN CASE OF EMERGENCY
BREAK GLASS
Wii

IT'S MAYHEM IN CRISIS CITY!


Wii
EMERGENCY MAYHEM
codemasters

Take the wheel of the three Emergency Services and race to the scene of the next crazy disaster!

Use the Wii™ controls in wacky ways to solve unique crises
Share the mayhem with up to four players in party mode.

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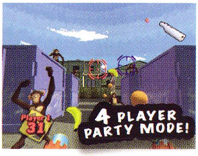
Shut the Fire Hydrant!
MINI-GAME MAYHEM!


4 PLAYER PARTY MODE!

www.codemasters.com/emergency

TEEN
T
CONTENT RATED BY
ESRB
Cartoon Violence
Comic Mischief

Wii™

supersonic

codemasters™

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